

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

BY

RAMSAY MUIR

*Lately Professor of Modern History in the
University of Manchester*

VOLUME II

(THE MODERN COMMONWEALTH)

PART IV

DISRUPTION AND RE-BIRTH

(A.D. 1760—1815)

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Late Professor of Modern History in the University of Manchester

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BOOK VII

THE DISRUPTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE BIRTH OF NEW FORCES AND IDEAS

(A.D. 1760-1793)

INTRODUCTION

THE resounding triumphs of the Seven Years' War, with which we closed our first volume, were not merely the culmination of the history of the first British Empire ; they were almost its conclusion. For within twenty years of the victorious Peace of Paris the British Empire had been shattered by the successful revolt of the American colonies, and there were many who thought that the days of British greatness were at an end.

But it is wrong to think of the generation in which this dissolution of the partnership of freedom took place as merely a time of disaster. It was not a period of endings ; it was rather a period of beginnings, during which the conditions and problems of our modern world began to take shape. That is why this forms the appropriate point at which to open our second volume : henceforth there is present in our story a sense of actuality which could not be so strongly felt in its earlier course. ~~We are watching the emergence of problems which are still alive.~~

The American Revolution itself was obviously a beginning rather than an ending. It was the beginning of the history of a great new nation of English speech, dedicated to the ideal of political liberty ; the beginning also of the proclamation of democracy as a system of government based not merely upon expediency but upon theoretic right. And with the disruption of the first British Empire was associated the ~~birth of the second British Empire~~, in the organisation of the Canadian group of colonies and the first settlement of Australia. In India also this was a period of beginnings. The power which Clive had established was but an insecure and fortuitous dominion : it was the work of Warren Hastings which laid the real foundations of the British Empire in India, by organising for the first time a just and efficient system of government, and by cleansing the British name from the disrepute of corruption and oppression.

Not less definitely was the period one of beginnings in the

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political development of the British homeland. The Whig oligarchy, having served its turn, was overthrown by George III. In its place, after an interval when royal authority seemed to be partially re-established, the system of cabinet government resting upon organised parties came into being, almost in the form in which we know it to-day ; and the systematic corruption of Walpole's day was brought to an end. At the same time the demand for parliamentary reform took its rise, though it was not to win its triumph until the nineteenth century. In Ireland, again, we have to trace to these years the beginning of that organised nationalist movement which was thenceforward to play so momentous a part in British politics.

But it is in the economic sphere more than anywhere else that the student is compelled to recognise in this period the seed-plot of the modern age. For it was in these years that the Industrial Revolution took its rise, and that the potent forces of Mechanism, of Steam, of Coal, and of Iron began to transform the whole structure of economic society ; while alongside of the emergence of these new forces, an agrarian revolution came to help in reshaping the social order which had seemed so stable and settled in the middle of the eighteenth century.

In the realm of ideas also the generation which was first stirred by the doctrines of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, and which was taught to think historically by Edward Gibbon and Edmund Burke, may justly be regarded as a time of new beginnings in political and economic thought. Now, too, a powerful and many-sided humanitarian movement began to exercise a potent influence in politics : it was to be one of the main moulding forces in the shaping of the new British Commonwealth whose development is the theme of this volume.

In short, to whatever aspect of the period the student may devote his attention, whether to politics or to economic development, whether to the realm of ideas or the realm of action, whether to Britain or Ireland, America or India, Canada or Australia, he finds himself in the presence of new forces and new ideas. The second era of the British Commonwealth has begun.

CHAPTER I

THE DOWNFALL OF THE WHIGS

(A.D. 1760-1775)

§ 1. *The Political Problem in Britain.*

AFTER the triumphs and achievements of the Seven Years' War, the story of British politics during the early years of George III. presents, on the surface, a sad anti-climax ; for it seems to be concerned almost wholly with the squalid intrigues of groups of office-seeking politicians. Great problems, it is true, emerge and insist upon being considered : the problem of Ireland, the problem of the American colonies, the problem of the French in Canada, the problem of India—problems as varied and challenging as any people has ever had to solve. But they all seem to be blurred and thrust into the background by the sordid rivalries of factions ; the taxation of America and the misgovernment of India appear to be regarded as important chiefly in so far as they affect the political fortunes of this or that political group. This is not a wholly just view of the period, for a great deal of honest thinking was devoted to these problems, and the differences of opinion to which they gave rise partly account for the complication of British politics. But this is the view conveyed by the memoir-writers and pamphleteers of the time. And beyond a doubt the confused faction-fight of British politics during the first ten years of George III. was largely responsible for the unsatisfactory way in which these vast and inspiring problems were treated.

For this reason it is necessary to trace in outline the course of British politics during these years ; without some appreciation of these matters the development of the other great problems of the period cannot be made intelligible. But there is a better reason. However much obscured, great principles were involved in the strife of factions ; and the form which the British system of government was to assume was under debate. The Whig oligarchy which had

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ruled Britain for fifty years was breaking down : that was the main cause of the confusion. Was its dissolution also to involve the disappearance of the system of cabinet government based upon the support of an organised party in Parliament, which had been the main political achievement of the Whigs ? Was this system to be replaced by one in which the Crown would regain effective control of the executive government, withdrawing it from the influence of political parties, as in nineteenth-century Prussia ? That was the real issue which was under debate during these years of confusion, though it was obscured by the intrigues of factions. And with it were combined two other questions, not less important. Could the supremacy of Parliament be reconciled with coherent and efficient government by any other means than the use of organised corruption, such as every Government had employed since Parliament became dominant ? Could the House of Commons be made more effectively representative of the nation without dislocating the whole traditional machinery of government ? These were questions as important as any of the imperial problems which had been raised by the conquests of the war. And although they were never very definitely formulated, they were implicit in the controversies of this time.

The Whig oligarchy had rendered real services to self-government. It had reduced the monarchy to a sort of crowned presidency in a free State. It had shown that a great nation could be governed without entrusting discretionary powers to a monarch, by leaving the conduct of affairs to a compact group of ministers jointly responsible to Parliament, and capable of being replaced without any serious upheaval. It had secured a degree of freedom in belief, in speech, and in writing, such as had scarcely ever been enjoyed by any community in the world's history. But the power of the Whigs had always rested upon the lavish use of Crown patronage for the purchase of support, and upon the exclusion from the public service of every man who differed from the ruling group. These features of their system had always been the objects of angry criticism. They had become more marked than ever since Walpole's time, and meanwhile government had become more inefficient. The Whig party had broken up into cliques, competing for patronage and power ; and the nation had finally lost patience with them when, at the crisis of the war, their exclusiveness threatened to shut

out the great Pitt from the conduct of national affairs.¹ The Whig oligarchy had served its turn, and the time had come for its overthrow.

The only clear view as to an alternative to party government after the Whig pattern was the view which Bolingbroke had expounded in *The Patriot King*.² the view that the Crown must be restored to the position designed for it in the Revolution Settlement, as the real head of the executive, free to choose the best men for ministerial posts, irrespective of party. This view was widely held. It was held by Pitt, the national hero, who hated the Whig oligarchy. It was held by the opposition group who gathered round Leicester House, the home of the Dowager Princess of Wales. Most important, it was held by the young Prince who ascended the throne as George III. in 1760, and by his friend and tutor, Lord Bute.

George III. had cast himself for the part of Bolingbroke's Patriot King, and in many ways he was well fitted for the part. Though almost every drop of blood in his veins was German, he had been born and bred in England, thought of himself as an Englishman, and was, in truth, typically English in many traits. Honest, hard-working, brave, obstinate, and self-confident, he had a sound practical intelligence, but a very limited imagination, and he distrusted long views and sweeping theories. He was sincerely patriotic, and loyal to the British constitution as he understood it. The Whig tradition has charged him with aiming at a sort of despotism. There is no justification for the charge. His aim was simply to restore the Crown to the position designed for it in the Revolution Settlement, and to use its powers in the spirit of Bolingbroke's famous tract. He thought himself justified in employing all the customary methods of patronage and corruption, which long usage had established. But he was so loyal to tradition that he did not even attempt to preside over his own cabinet, as William III. and Anne had done, though only a recent practice stood in the way.

If the Bolingbroke plan was to be carried into effect, the Whigs had to be deprived of their monopoly of power and patronage. This was easy: all patronage legally belonged to the King, and he could (and promptly did) resume control of it. But this was not enough. It was also necessary that the King should choose his individual ministers, without respect to party or 'connexion': and he found that the

¹ Vol. I. pp. 729, 738.

² Vol. I. p. 698.

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various groups hung together, and insisted upon stipulating for a number of offices, to be given in the way they laid down. It was further necessary that the King should have the determining voice upon broad questions of national policy, and that he and not the cabinet should decide whether a recalcitrant minister should be dismissed or not. This involved the destruction of the conjoint responsibility of the cabinet; and George III. found that the groups of ministers whom he was compelled to employ insisted upon acting as a cabinet, and sometimes upon dictating to himself. He could dismiss them; but the next group to whom he applied were apt to adopt the same attitude. In truth only one among the leading political figures of the time fully shared the King's theory of government. This was Pitt, whose co-operation George was from the first eager to obtain. But Pitt was alienated by the Peace of Paris, and refused his help until 1766. When at length he did give it, the King's game was won. We have to trace in this chapter the stages in the King's struggle, until his final triumph in 1770, and the political problems which arose in the course of the controversy.

§ 2. *First Stages in the Attack upon the Whigs.*

When George III. succeeded to the throne the ministry in power was the coalition of Pitt and Newcastle, which had won such triumphs in the war. But there was no love lost between Pitt and Newcastle's Whig gang, who resented the dictatorial methods of the great minister, and would have been glad to be rid of him. It was the Whig gang that George III. wanted to overthrow; and he was anxious to obtain Pitt's co-operation. His first step was to require that his friend, Lord Bute, should be admitted to the cabinet: and ere long Bute was promoted to the Secretaryship of State, thus becoming Pitt's closest colleague. Bute's appointment was a sign that the nomination of ministers was no longer to be in the hands of Newcastle. For a time Bute gave steady support to Pitt against the murmurings of his colleagues; for he knew that Pitt would be the King's best ally. But when Pitt insisted that war must be declared against Spain¹—a course which seemed to most men unjustifiable—Bute reluctantly deserted him; for he and his master were loth to prolong the war, desiring the restoration of peace in order that they might devote them-

¹ Vol. I. p. 754.

selves to domestic problems. Thereupon the great man resigned in high dudgeon (1761), so deeply offended that five years passed before the King was able to obtain his co-operation.

This was a bad beginning for the King's great design. The only people who were pleased were Newcastle and his friends. But if they hoped that their old ascendancy was about to be restored, they were soon disillusioned. Already an alarming thing had happened. There had to be a general election in 1761; and the King, instead of allowing Newcastle to use the royal patronage and the royal purse to make a majority, had announced that he proposed to deal with these matters himself. The result was that the Parliament of 1761 was the first for nearly fifty years in which the Whigs could not count upon a sure majority, and in which the placemen, who formed one-fourth of the House of Commons, did not look to the Whig leader for instructions as to how they should vote, but to agents of the King. Next year (1762) Newcastle was driven to resign. In a sense his resignation marked the end of the long Whig ascendancy; having lost control of patronage the Whigs were reduced to impotence, and had sunk to the level of being merely one among a number of groups of borough-owners. It was no longer in their power to make it impossible for any ministry of which they disapproved to hold office: henceforth any ministry which had the King's support could command a majority, provided that it was sufficiently competent to obtain the support of the independent country gentlemen; but no ministry which the King disliked could retain office for a week.

But it was not enough for a Patriot King that he should be able to dismiss powerful ministers whom he disliked. He must also be able to enlist the services of the best men without respect to party. In the meanwhile Lord Bute took charge of affairs, working in intimate relations with the King. Bute was a wealthy and cultivated Scottish nobleman, but he lacked both experience of and capacity for public affairs, and his tenure of office was anything but successful. His main task was to bring the war to an end; and he did so by concluding, rather hurriedly, the Peace of Paris, which, though it was a reasonable settlement,¹ could be represented as a betrayal of national interests, because it did not secure for Britain all the advantages which her victories might have enabled her to insist upon.

¹ Vol. I. p. 756.

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On this ground it was bitterly attacked by Pitt; and it was only by wholesale corruption that it was forced through the House of Commons. The independent country gentlemen, under Pitt's influence, were very restive.

From the first Bute was exposed to the most virulent criticism. All the office-hunting groups were in full cry. He was denounced as a 'favourite'—a fatal charge. He was the object of a vile and scurrilous newspaper campaign, in which he was sneered at as a Scotsman, and shameful innuendoes were thrown out regarding his relations with the King's mother. The worst of the slanderers was John Wilkes, a bankrupt libertine and member of Parliament who published a weekly paper under the ironical name of the *North Briton*. George III. would have been more than human if he had not longed to punish Wilkes. Bute endured the storm in silence; but it made public life intolerable to him, and as soon as the peace was concluded he resigned his office. The whole episode had given a serious set-back to the King's design.

George III. would now have liked to call in Pitt to the direction of affairs; but Pitt's anger at the peace made this impossible. He therefore chose the great man's brother-in-law, George Grenville, who was probably the best man then available. An honest, able, industrious, and rather pedantic lawyer, Grenville had a high reputation in the House of Commons, because, in a greater degree than most of his contemporaries, he made a point of studying the subjects with which he dealt. Grenville had only a small personal following in Parliament. Even when, after a year, he was joined by the Duke of Bedford and his group, he was far from being able to command a majority of pledged followers. Yet he held office for two years, and the Whigs, even though helped by Pitt, were unable to overthrow him; because so long as he had the King's support he could count upon the votes of the placemen, and upon those of the independent country gentlemen. Nevertheless Grenville and Bedford insisted upon acting as if they were party chiefs instead of being dependent upon the King: and from the outset their dictatorial methods, and their obvious desire to strengthen their own 'connexions,' aroused the King's resentment. This was not the kind of ministry for a Patriot King.

Grenville is chiefly remembered for his American policy, with which we shall deal in a later chapter.¹ But in

¹ Below, Chap. IV. p. 42.

England and in Parliament the American question attracted very little attention until the last months of his ministry, when Englishmen were startled by the vehemence of the American opposition to the Stamp Act. What engrossed most attention during Grenville's ministry was the prosecution of Wilkes for having suggested, in No. 45 of his paper, that the King's speech on the peace contained a lie. He was charged with 'seditious libel' and arrested on a 'general warrant' (that is, a warrant giving no names) directed against the 'authors, printers, and publishers' of the *North Briton*. Such warrants had often been used by Governments; they had been used by Pitt. But in this case they were declared illegal by Chief Justice Pratt. This judicial decision is important because it deprived Government of a mode of legal procedure not open to private citizens. In Britain, as in no other European country, the ordinary machinery of the law was alone to be available for Government.

Wilkes suddenly became a popular hero; especially when the House of Commons expelled him, and the House of Lords charged him with breach of privilege for having attributed indecencies to a bishop in a blasphemous *jeu d'esprit* intended for private circulation. Without, however, awaiting his trial on the main charge of libel, Wilkes fled to France, being so deep in debt that he was not safe once he had lost his parliamentary privilege of freedom from arrest. The episode was an unsavoury one. Yet it filled the public mind, and contributed to create for a time an atmosphere of hostility to the King and his policy.

George III. had no quarrel with the principal measures with which Grenville and his colleague Bedford were associated. But he found the ministers dictatorial, and far too independent. Already, after Grenville had held office for a year, the King had in vain opened negotiations with Pitt. In 1765, having resolved to get rid of Grenville, he tried Pitt once more; and, failing again, fell back with great reluctance upon the Old Whigs, now led by the Marquis of Rockingham. The Whigs also wanted Pitt: with his help they hoped to re-establish their own power and put a stop once for all to the King's meddling. But Pitt would have none of them; and they never forgave him. They formed a short-lived and troubled ministry, which succeeded in achieving only one important measure—the repeal of the Stamp Act, which had produced such an outcry in America. The Whig ministry of 1765-1766 was indeed

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a sad revelation of the weakness of that once omnipotent party. It consisted of a group of amiable magnates without vigour or ability. Only one man of brains was among them—Edmund Burke, an Irish man of letters whom Lord Rockingham had engaged as his private secretary. In that humble capacity Burke wielded no power; nor did the proud Whigs ever admit him to the inner circle of their group—his origin was too humble. Yet Burke's genius has thrown about the group a glamour which they never possessed in reality. Their expulsion from power had largely purified them from the corruption which had been the shame of their predecessors. But their merely negative virtues did not save them from impotence. The King's obedient army of placemen hampered and worried the ministry during its brief tenure of office; and when the right moment came it was turned out without hesitation or difficulty.

§ 3. *The Experiment of Non-Party Government, 1766-1770.*

It was turned out because at last the great Pitt had been persuaded to lend his immense prestige for the formation of a genuine non-party government, consisting of the best men from all sides. The ideal of a non-party ministry was at last to be given a fair trial. Pitt threw himself into the task with enthusiasm, and got together a ministry, drawn from many different groups, which for varied capacity surpassed all its predecessors and most of its successors.

He hoped to achieve great things. He was to solve the American problem; he was to regain for Britain the leadership in European politics which she had lost in the last few years. But none of these great hopes was fulfilled; and the reason for their non-fulfilment was simply that the ministry was a non-party ministry, whose members had no principles in common, and no habitude of acting together, so that they were constantly at cross-purposes, and could not achieve that unity of aim which is necessary for successful government. Pitt himself soon realised how great was the blunder into which he had drifted. He withdrew to his country house, and refused even to see or give counsel to his distracted colleagues. He was supposed to be suffering from gout; he was probably suffering still more from disillusionment and the loss of belief in himself. When he returned from his seclusion,

in 1769, it was to throw himself into violent opposition to the ministry which he himself had formed, but which had outraged all the ideas he held most dear.

For this non-party ministry of able and honest men had meanwhile drifted, under Pitt's loyal henchman, the well-meaning young Duke of Grafton, into a series of the most extraordinary and tragic follies and blunders. It had failed to do anything with India. It had started a new and fatal scheme for the taxation of America. It had given to John Wilkes a new and much better plea for posing as a martyr, and had aroused passionate indignation throughout the country, by its treatment of the Middlesex election. It had seemed to threaten the freedom of the Press, and had convinced the country that Parliament was an unrepresentative and tyrannical body. And all this was the work of a ministry which Pitt had formed, of a non-party ministry which was to realise the dreams of Bolingbroke! This result shed a new light upon the subject of party-government, which most men had been ready to condemn; and Edmund Burke, the apologist of the Whigs, seized the occasion to write, in his pamphlet on *The Causes of the Present Discontents*, a very cogent demonstration of the necessity of party as a means of giving consistency to government. The experience of Pitt's ministry did indeed demonstrate the impracticability of non-party government under the British system.

Two great questions were especially raised by this ill-starred ministry during the years 1766-1770. On its disastrous revival of the attempt to tax the American colonies more will be said in a later chapter. But, among British contemporaries, it aroused yet greater excitement by its handling of the Middlesex election. At the general election of 1768 John Wilkes, who had returned from France, became a candidate for the populous constituency of Middlesex, and was triumphantly elected. The House of Commons declared the return invalid on the ground of Wilkes's condemnation for seditious libel. A second election was held, and Wilkes was again returned, and again refused admission; a third election produced the same result; at a fourth election a Government candidate was put up, and (although he obtained only 296 votes against Wilkes's 1143) was declared duly returned. In effect, the constituency of Middlesex was disfranchised; and the House of Commons, by declaring the minority candidate elected, assumed to itself a very dangerous power.

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This episode filled the next years with uproar. The ministry was deeply discredited. All the elements of opposition—the Old Whigs, the followers of Chatham, even the followers of Grenville—were drawn together, and for a time hoped to overwhelm the Government, from which the Whig and the Chathamite members had now nearly all withdrawn. A violent press campaign, in which the hard, brilliant, vitriolic letters of the mysterious *Junius* played a principal part, stimulated public interest in politics; and the attempts of the House to prohibit newspaper reports of its debates, and the conflicts which followed this, intensified the popular feeling, and showed that Government and Parliament alike were, for the moment at any rate, out of touch with the sentiment of the nation.

But the excitement of 1769 and 1770 died down almost as quickly as it had arisen. The settlement of disputed elections was transferred from the whole House (which had always decided such questions on party lines) to a select Committee (1770). Wilkes, after his brief period of stormy prominence, was permitted to take his place in Parliament at the election of 1774, and soon subsided into an extinct volcano. But although the ministry had to be reconstructed in 1770, the Whigs, even with the support of Chatham, found themselves as far from the restoration of their old ascendancy as ever. George III., with obstinate courage, had held on his way through the storm; and he was rewarded by complete victory. The fortunes of the great Whig party were never at a lower ebb than in 1770 and the following years.

But the brief fury of the Middlesex election was not without lasting results. It had drawn attention to the unrepresentative character of Parliament, and it gave birth to a demand for parliamentary reform. The Whigs (who had no desire to see the abolition of pocket boroughs) were content to urge that the means of corruption possessed by the Crown should be reduced, in order to make the struggle more equal between the King and themselves. Chatham and the unknown *Junius* went no further than to advocate general elections every three instead of every seven years, and an increase in the number of county members. But outside the circle of the parliamentary politicians bolder demands began to be raised. During the Middlesex election a body called the Society of Supporters of the Bill of Rights had been formed. It was the first public organisation for a political end; and it advocated equal political rights and

annual Parliaments. The same demand was put forward in a pamphlet of 1776 by Major Cartwright, who came to be known as the Father of Parliamentary Reform; and in the same year John Wilkes courted publicity for the last time by introducing a bill 'for a just and equal representation of the people of England in Parliament.' Wilkes's Bill was rejected without a voice being raised in its support; but the idea of constitutional reconstruction had been brought to birth, and it was not to die.

§ 4. *The King's Victory the Ministry of North.*

There was as yet, however, no large body of public opinion anxious for such changes; and George III. was right in believing that the excitement over the Middlesex election was only a temporary and evanescent frenzy. He had, indeed, at last won complete victory in his conflict with the Whigs. The ministry of 1770 was a ministry after his own heart. For though it is known to history as the ministry of Lord North, it was in truth the King's ministry. George was in reality his own Prime Minister, in spite of the fact that he did not preside over cabinet meetings; North always repudiated the title of Prime Minister, regarding himself only as the King's principal agent in the distribution of patronage and the management of the House of Commons, and as a matter of principle, he deliberately subordinated his own judgment to that of his master. The other ministers were no more than heads of departments, directly responsible to the King, and it was the King who mainly determined the broad lines of national policy, and who gave unity and co-ordination to the various departments. Once more, as in the time of William III., the King was the real head of the executive government, and the theory of the joint responsibility of the cabinet, which had grown up during the period of Whig rule, was broken down.

But George had not destroyed the party system. On the contrary, he had created a new party of which he was himself the leader, a revived Tory party, which had ousted the Whigs by employing their own methods of electoral corruption and the skilful use of patronage. And over against this new Tory party stood an organised opposition, unceasingly critical, consisting of the purified remnant of the Whigs and the small group of Lord Chatham's followers. They were weak, disheartened, and divided among themselves. But they were an organised opposition, standing for

principles sharply contrasted with those of the King's party ; and the contrast became sharper and more clear as the great American conflict developed and expanded. The party system, instead of being destroyed, had in fact been made clearer and more definite by George III's victory over the Whigs : the shifting groups of the early years of the reign were coalescing into two clearly marked bodies, and from 1770 onwards it was more nearly true than it had ever been that the members of the House of Commons could be divided into supporters and opponents of the Government, Tories and Whigs, each with their recognised leaders. Thus, paradoxical as it may appear, the definite division of Parliament into two opposing political armies was the main outcome of George III's attempt to destroy party.

Meanwhile, however, the opposition in Parliament was helpless. All the Government proposals were carried by overwhelming majorities. And this was due not merely to the fact that corruption was employed on a wholesale scale—on a scale far more lavish than Walpole ever dreamed of—but still more to the fact that most of the independent country gentlemen in the House of Commons were quite content that the King should control the Government, and had no quarrel with his policy. In the House of Lords the Whig majority vanished, partly by reason of creations of new peers, partly because many peers who had earlier counted as Whigs were ready to transfer their allegiance. And there is no reason to suppose that in thus accepting the new regime the two Houses of Parliament ran counter to public feeling in the country at large. The King himself and the policy he pursued were by no means unpopular. All the evidence goes to show that even his American policy was almost universally accepted or acquiesced in—until things began to go badly wrong in 1777 and the following years. If an election on quite democratic lines could have taken place at any time between 1770 and 1777 it is probable that the party which supported the King's policy would have obtained a majority quite as large as that which it enjoyed under the anomalies of the old representative system.

What is more, it must be recognised that the Government of George III and Lord North showed itself competent enough, until it had to stand the strain of a great war. It carried through constructive measures of real importance, in many fields of national policy. In the Quebec Act (1774) it found a wise solution for the difficult problem of the

government of French Canada, which had been neglected since the conquest of that colony in 1759-1760.¹ Its India Act of 1773,² if it proved in practice to be unworkable, at least represented a bold assumption of responsibility for the welfare of the Indian peoples, and was, in spite of its inevitable deficiencies, a far more courageous and statesman-like measure than anything that had been earlier attempted or even proposed.

Royal control of the executive seemed to be working well. But for the disasters of the American War it might have got itself established; the fluid and unfixed institutions of Britain might have been set in a mould like that of nineteenth-century Prussia; the system of government by a cabinet jointly responsible to Parliament might have passed out of memory, as a discredited device of the defeated Whig oligarchy; and the infant movement for parliamentary reform might have been still longer delayed. Thus the colonial controversy reacted upon, and in the end determined, the course of political development in the old country, and perhaps saved Parliament from a gradual diminution of its powers.

[Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*; Robertson's *England under the Hanoverians*, Hunt's *England from 1760 to 1801*; Winstanley's *Personal and Party Government*, and Lord Chatham and the Whigs; Williams's *William Pitt*; Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*; Veitch's *Genesis of Parliamentary Reform*; Trevelyan's *Early Life of C. J. Fox*, Burke's *Present Discontents*; Grafton's *Autobiography*; H. Walpole's *Memoirs of George III.*; *Letters of Junius*; Donne's *Correspondence of George III. and Lord North*]

¹ See below, Chap. XI. p. 130.

² See below, Chap. VI. p. 79.

CHAPTER II

EUROPE UNDER BENEVOLENT DESPOTISM

(A.D. 1763-1789)

§ 1. *Britain and France.*

ONE of the most marked contrasts between the first five-and-twenty years of the reign of George III. and the half century of Whig oligarchy which preceded it was that, while under the Whigs foreign affairs seemed to be the most important part of politics, and ministers were continually preoccupied by the making of treaties and alliances for the maintenance of the Balance of Power, under George III. foreign affairs sank into the background, and Britain made no important treaties and entered into no alliances. The reason for this striking change was not that any policy of non-intervention in European affairs had been deliberately adopted, but partly that domestic questions engrossed attention, and partly that the constant changes of ministry were fatal to continuity of policy. In the eyes of continental rulers Britain seemed to have fallen a prey to civil confusion. 'England,' said Frederick the Great in 1769, 'has become a sort of island - Poland.' British influence in continental affairs has perhaps never in modern history been less than during the quarter of a century which followed the resounding triumphs of the Seven Years' War.

There was only one problem of foreign politics which intermittently aroused the interest of British politicians—the fear of a revival of the strength of the Bourbon Powers, France and Spain, and of a future attempt to avenge their catastrophic defeat. These fears were by no means groundless; for though France had been deeply discredited by her humiliation in the last war, and was nearly bankrupt, she had not given up the hope of revenge; and under the guidance of the able minister Choiseul she was preparing for it, especially by the creation of a formidable navy. Her opportunity came with the revolt of the American Colonies, and she was ready to use it. When the long conflict

between the two old rivals was thus renewed, Britain paid dearly for her isolation. Chatham was almost the only British statesman of the period who foresaw this danger. When he formed his non-party ministry of 1766 he strove to draw together a European alliance against the Bourbon Powers. But he was wholly unsuccessful. Frederick of Prussia, to whom he first applied, would have nothing to say to a British alliance, partly because all his attention was now given to the affairs of Eastern Europe, where Britain could be of no use to him, but mainly because he thought that Britain was a decaying Power, and that no confidence could be placed in a State whose governments were so transient and insecure as those of Britain now seemed to be ; nor had he forgiven what he regarded as the desertion of himself in 1763.

There were, however, only two moments, before the American War, when any actual friction took place between Britain and the Bourbon Powers. One was in 1768-9, after Chatham had withdrawn into his strange seclusion. The island of Corsica was in revolt against the city of Genoa, to which it had long been subject ; the Genoese, unable to conquer their revolting subjects, proposed to sell the island to France ; and the Corsicans asked to be taken under the protection of the British Crown. Shelburne, Secretary of State in 1768, who was a disciple of Chatham, was anxious to accept this offer, and Chatham, had he been in active politics, would certainly have taken the same line. France was not yet ready for a new war, and would not have resisted. But one section of the divided British cabinet was against taking action, and actually sent word to France that Britain would not in any case go to war about Corsica. The result was that Corsica was annexed by France (1769) ; and Napoleon Buonaparte, born in that very year, became a French subject. It is strange to reflect that but for Lord Chatham's illness Napoleon might have been a British subject. In the next year, 1770, there was a new alarm, when a British garrison in the Falkland Islands was expelled by the Spaniards, who claimed the islands. But North's Government acted with more firmness than its predecessor, and the cloud blew over.

In spite of these events, and the general fear of French designs, one of the outstanding features of this period was the intimacy of the social relations between England and France. Members of the English governing class were almost as much at home in Paris as in London. In France

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admiration for British institutions and British ways of life had reached a curiously high pitch; and this Anglomania, which deeply affected the political thought of France, contributed to prepare the way for the French Revolution.

The Government of France, bent upon reversing the decisions of the Seven Years' War in the spheres of naval and colonial power, was tempted, like the British Government, to pay little attention to the general politics of Europe, especially after the fall of Choiseul in 1770. Thus the two richest and most highly civilised of the European States were concentrating their thoughts upon one another, partly in mutual fear, partly in mutual admiration. And the consequence was that at least one terrible event took place which could scarcely have happened had France and Britain maintained their old leadership, even in rivalry, in the affairs of Europe. This terrible event was the dismemberment of the living body of the Polish nation in the First Partition of Poland, 1772.

§ 2. *The Eastern Powers and the Partition of Poland.*

The diplomatic history of Europe during the thirty years between the Peace of Paris and the outbreak of the French Revolutionary War was dominated by the relations of the three great military despotisms of the East—Russia, Austria and Prussia.¹

Of these Russia had but recently begun to play the part of a European Power, and she had only half emerged from barbarism. But she had played a decisive part in recent events; in particular her friendship had saved Prussia from destruction at the end of the Seven Years' War. Russia had just passed under the sway of an extraordinarily able and unscrupulous German woman, Catherine II., who had in 1762 deposed her husband, the Tsar Peter III., and had been a consenting party to his murder. This amazing woman was to be the second founder of the greatness of Russia; during her long reign, which extended from 1762 to 1796, Russia's territories were greatly extended, and she became one of the dominating factors in the politics of Europe.

Austria, who had long had the controlling voice in Eastern European politics, and had hitherto shown to Russia a sort of condescending patronage, was perturbed

¹ See the maps, Atlas, 5th Edition Plates 10 and 26, 6th Edition Plates 56, 57 and 61.

by the vigour and independence of Catherine's policy, especially when Catherine began to win victories over the Turks; for Austria was ambitious of extending her territory at the expense of the decaying Turkish Empire. But she was also very jealous of Prussia, the upstart Power which had wrested from her the rich province of Silesia, and which now threatened her traditional leadership among the petty States of Germany.

Prussia, on her part, being much the weakest of these three Powers, and having been bled white by the desperate struggle of the Seven Years' War, watched with anxiety the ambitions of her powerful neighbours. Frederick the Great feared lest Austria should take advantage of his weakness to wreak vengeance for the loss of Silesia; and as a safeguard against this danger he clung to his alliance with Russia, which had been formally concluded in 1764. For more than a century to come the maintenance of an alliance with Russia was one of the keynotes of Prussian policy. But Frederick did not wish to be drawn by this alliance into a war against Austria, which might easily result from Austro-Russian rivalry in the Balkans. He therefore devoted his ingenious and unscrupulous intelligence to guiding the policy of his great neighbours into channels which might be turned to the profit of Prussia; and the partition of Poland was the result.

The huge kingdom of Poland lay almost enclosed by the territories of these three formidable and sinister Powers. It was reduced to impotence by its absurd and unworkable system of government, and by the dissensions of its nobles. Ever since 1735 Poland had been falling more and more under the influence of Russia; and it was the deliberate policy of Catherine to keep Poland weak and helpless. When the Poles, realising at last that the futility of their system was ruining their country, tried to initiate reforms, Catherine, with Frederick's support, intervened to forbid the proposed changes, posing as the protector of the 'ancient liberties of Poland' because these 'liberties' left the country at her mercy. Some of the Polish nobles formed a confederation to resist the Russian domination, and at first won some success; Catherine, whose armies were ill organised, had to get help from Frederick of Prussia.

In the hope of preventing the complete domination of Poland by Russia, which would be threatening to themselves, the Turks (largely at the instigation of France) declared war upon Russia in 1768. But this only gave to

Catherine the opportunity of fresh and easier conquests. She drove the Turks from the northern shore of the Black Sea. Her armies overran Moldavia and Wallachia, and threatened to cross the Danube and march on Constantinople (1769). A Greek rebellion against Turkey was talked of; and it seemed as if the last days of the Turkish Empire were at hand. But Austria was not willing to allow Russia to conquer European Turkey; and in 1771 she announced that if the Russians crossed the Danube she would declare war. Frederick of Prussia had no wish to be drawn into a war about Turkish questions when his State was only beginning to recover from the strain of the last great conflict; so he set himself to persuade the two rivals to indemnify themselves at the expense of Poland. His cunning and persistent diplomacy was successful; and in 1772 the three robber-States took each a great slice of the Polish kingdom, and compelled the Polish Diet to ratify their plunder. In all they took from the unhappy kingdom one-third of its territory and more than one-third of its population. Russia's share was the largest in extent, and Austria's in wealth; but Prussia acquired the province of West Prussia, which linked up her detached duchy of East Prussia with the main block of her dominions; and she retained this Polish region until she was compelled to disgorge it by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

Two years later, in 1774, Catherine ended her Turkish war by the treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji, which forms a landmark in the history of the Eastern Question. In accordance with the bargain made at the time of the partition she abandoned the provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia. But she got control of the north coast of the Black Sea; her fleets henceforward threatened Constantinople; and she also acquired a claim, vague and undefined, but capable of being turned to advantage, to interfere in the Balkans as the protector of the Christian subjects of the Turk.

The rivalry of Russia and Austria for the inheritance of the Turkish Empire, which for the first time took shape in these years, was to be the chief cause of the difficulty of the Eastern Question, and one of the principal sources of disturbance and alarm in Europe, for a century and a half to come; and the British Commonwealth, though at first it seemed to be quite unconcerned, was in the future to be deeply involved in this inextricable tangle.

§ 3. *The Benevolent Despots.*

The development of the Eastern Question and the iniquitous partition of Poland were the only events of first-rate importance in the political history of Europe during these years. In one sense the partition was characteristic of the period, since it showed that the ruling personages of this despotic age paid no regard to the desires and sentiments of the peoples whom they ruled, and had no sense of the strength and value of the national spirit. But it would be a mistake to conclude from this that the politics of the period were unenlightened, or uninfluenced by ideals. Very much the reverse. There had never been a period in modern history when the problems of government and the duties of Governments to their subjects were more earnestly or more seriously discussed. It was the age of the philosophers, whose criticism of existing institutions was preparing the way for the French Revolution. But most of these thinkers, whilst they maintained that government existed for the advantage of the governed, were very far from holding that it ought to be conducted in accordance with the ideas of the governed, or under their control. They mostly believed that wise reforms were rather to be expected from the wisdom of a monarch or his advisers than from the ignorance of the mob. And this belief seemed to be justified by what was going on in Europe.

For while in the countries where some semblance of popular government existed, as in Britain, very little active work of reform was carried on, the despots of the continent were competing with one another in their zeal for constructive reform, and were eagerly endeavouring to follow the precepts of the philosophers. This was not only the age of the philosophers, it was the age of the benevolent despots or philosopher-kings. In almost every European State, great or small, despotic princes or trusted ministers were labouring with untiring assiduity to give effect to the principles of the philosophers. The most outstanding of these hard-working and zealous rulers were Joseph II. of Austria, Catherine II. of Russia, and Frederick the Great of Prussia; but some of the minor princes, such as the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the Margrave of Baden, showed an even greater courage and intelligence. Everywhere the same features recur. There were legal and judicial reforms—the codification of laws, and the abolition of torture and of barbarous punishments. There were attacks upon the

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surviving abuses of feudalism, and in some cases bold attempts to emancipate the labouring class from serfdom. There were great public works carried out by the State, the making of roads and canals, the construction of harbours, the draining of marshes. There were systematic attempts to improve and develop agriculture, and to foster industry and foreign commerce. Everywhere there was generous patronage for learning: new universities were founded; academies of scholars were established; in some cases State systems of education were initiated. Restrictions on the publication of books were greatly diminished, and criticism and discussion by scholars (though not by ordinary men) were encouraged. In almost every case complete freedom of worship was allowed to all religious bodies, even in those States which had hitherto been most rigidly orthodox. One of the most striking events of the period was the expulsion of the powerful Jesuit order from nearly every European State; and this was a sign of the rationalist spirit which pre-eminently marked the age.

Never, in truth, have the European peoples witnessed a more strenuous outburst of reforming zeal than during the generation which preceded the French Revolution. The reforms were in every case due to the enlightenment of absolute rulers; they went in many cases far beyond the wishes of the peoples concerned; and they seemed to justify the view that benevolent despotism was the most progressive form of government. In truth the benevolent despot might well feel that his subjects did not know what was good for them, and that in their own interests it was right that their irrational sentiments and prejudices should be overridden. To the enlightened despot, the sentiment of nationality inevitably appeared irrational. Even in the case of Poland it could be plausibly argued that the attachment of the Poles to their separate national existence was mere sentimentalism; and that the peoples of the annexed regions obtained from their vigorous and progressive new masters practical and material boons which the absurd system of free Poland could never have yielded. Probably they did.

The theory that despotism could provide the most enlightened and progressive form of government thus obtained, during these years, a very fair trial. And, on the surface, it must be recognised that the strenuous and intelligent labours of the despots stand in favourable contrast with the factious intrigues of British politicians, and

with their squabbles over Middlesex elections and duties on tea. In the comparison which was challenged during this generation between absolute monarchy and parliamentary government all the advantage seemed to lie on the side of the former; political liberty appeared to lead only to ineffectiveness and confusion. Yet the labours of the despots led to little or no permanent result; their work was all swept away either by the Revolution or by the reaction which followed it. On the other hand the apparently futile arguments of British politics, and the acrimonious disputes between the mother-country and her daughter-States, were part of the great process of educating whole peoples to think about the problems of their common welfare, and to co-operate in realising it.

'I am only the first servant of my people,' Frederick the Great once claimed; but this claim did not truly represent the facts. Frederick was the architect of a rising State, the builder of its future greatness; his people were only the bricks of which it was built, not encouraged, not even permitted, to have any opinions as to the plan on which it should be built, or to co-operate actively in the building. The State was everything, in the eyes of these despot-princes, the people only the means to the State's greatness. This was the accepted view as to the meaning and aims of the State in most of the countries of Europe during the generation which preceded the French Revolution; the conception against which that vast upheaval was a protest. But it was fundamentally opposed to the conception which was implicit in the system of self-government characteristic of every part of the British Commonwealth.

To every British citizen it was axiomatic that the prime duty of the State was to protect the liberties which his ancestors had acquired for him, and to ensure him freedom to think and say and do what he liked, so long as he did not injure his neighbours. He regarded the laws not as the edicts of his masters, alterable at their will, but as the protection of his own security, binding upon his rulers, and alterable only by an assembly which (whatever its defects) did genuinely represent the national mind. It was these beliefs, and the perhaps unreasonable fear that George III. was ready to disregard them, which led to the political controversies in Britain during the first ten years of the reign. It was these beliefs, and the perhaps unreasonable fear that the British Parliament intended to override them, which led the American colonists first into

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opposition and then into rebellion. Vaguely and imperfectly, but still really, the British peoples had adopted the view of the State as a partnership of free men ; and this gives to their sometimes factious and often futile arguments a dignity and a permanent interest which are lacking in the zealous reforming labours of the despots. Two rival conceptions of the meaning and aims of the State thus stood forth in clear contrast ; and it was the British communities which stood for the conception that has ultimately been adopted by the mind of humanity.

[Hassall, *Balance of Power* ; Sorel, *Eastern Question in the 18th Century* (English translation) ; Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, vol. i. ; Reddaway, *Frederick the Great* ; Norwood Young, *Frederick the Great* ; Bright, *Joseph II.* ; Bourgeois, *Manuel Historique de Politique Étrangère*.]

CHAPTER III

MISGOVERNMENT IN INDIA

(A.D. 1760-1772)

THE eclipse of British influence on the continent of Europe was not the only, or the worst, consequence of the chaos which reigned in British politics during the first ten years of George III. While the conflict between the King and the Whigs was reducing Britain to 'a sort of island-Poland,' not only foreign affairs but imperial affairs were neglected or mishandled. This was the more dangerous because, both in the East and in the West, problems of the most crucial importance, which directly arose from the victories of the late war, were presenting themselves for solution. It was in these years of faction-fighting that the American question drifted into an acute stage, without ever receiving the serious attention it deserved. In these years, also, with still less attention from the politicians, the amazing dominion which Clive's victories had won in India was disappointing every hope, and rapidly drifting towards ruin. From about 1770 onwards the American question and the Indian question, refusing to be denied, became the dominating issues in British politics. We have next to trace the stages by which these questions reached the degree of acuteness which startled the British public out of its indifference, and it will be convenient to deal first with the problem of India, the more bewildering and unfamiliar of the two.

§ 1 *Anarchy and Oppression in Bengal, 1760-1765.*

When Clive left India in 1760¹ the East India Company had been firmly established as the controlling power in Bengal, but it had not begun to think of assuming the government of the country. It, and its agents in the East, enjoyed power without responsibility, for the responsibility of government remained with the Nawab, who was in theory merely a viceroy for the Great Mogul at Delhi, and the traditional Indian methods of administration still went on. The Nawab was wholly dependent for the security of

¹ Vol. I p. 778

¹ his throne upon the Company and its troops; he was powerless without the Company, and powerless against it; he dared not deny its servants anything they asked. And just for that reason his authority over his subjects was gravely undermined, and his government lost all vigour and efficiency. It took twelve years to convince the Company at home that this state of things was unhealthy, and bad even for trade. During these twelve years political controversy was so acute at home that nobody paid much attention to Indian affairs. In these circumstances the servants of the Company in Bengal were left uncontrolled, and, having no sense of responsibility for the well-being of the country (for that was the Nawab's business), most of them shamefully abused their influence to make huge fortunes for themselves. They insisted that no dues should be exacted, not merely on the Company's export cargoes—the Company had enjoyed this right for fifty years—but on their own private and local trade: they overrode and disregarded the authorities of the country; and, acting through a horde of Indian agents, they entered into a grossly unfair competition with native traders.

Clive's firm hand had kept these abuses more or less in check; but after his departure in 1760 they burst out in full vigour. Even before the arrival of his successor, Vansittart, the Bengal servants resolved to displace the shiftless and untrustworthy old Nawab, Mir Jafar, whom Clive had set up after Plassey. The ease with which this change was made showed how complete was the mastery of these irresponsible tyrants of Bengal. In Mir Jafar's place his son-in-law, Mir Kasim, was made Nawab; but not until he had emptied his treasury in gifts to the leading members of Council. He was also forced to transfer to the Company's administration three of the richest districts in Bengal,¹ in order that their revenues might be used to defray the cost of the Company's army. This arrangement was not in itself unfair, because the cost of maintaining an army strong enough to defend Bengal was ruinously heavy, and was bringing the Company towards bankruptcy. These districts were the first large areas to be brought directly under British administration; and it is worth noting that during the next ten years they were the best governed districts in Bengal. When direct responsibility was thrown upon them, the servants of the Company were not in-

¹ Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong. See the maps, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 61 (a) and (b), 6th Edition Plate 65 (a) and (b).

capable of rising to it. The greatest evil of the position as a whole was just that they were *not* responsible for the government of Bengal, though they were all-powerful.

Mir Kasim turned out to be a much abler and more vigorous prince than his predecessor. He greatly reduced the waste and extravagance of the court; he improved the administration, and in so doing increased the revenue; and he reorganised his army on more efficient lines. Governor Vansittart, an honest but rather weak man, supported and encouraged him in these measures of reform; so did young Warren Hastings, who was at first Resident at the Nawab's capital and later a member of the Company's Council. But Vansittart and Hastings were alone among the leading servants of the Company in giving support to the reforming Nawab. The rest (who counted ten votes out of twelve at the Council) were alarmed by Mir Kasim's activity; they feared his military measures; they wanted to keep the native government weak and dependent; and they especially resented the Nawab's attempts to check their illegitimate trading activities. These had now reached such a height that Indian traders in Bengal were almost driven out of the market by the unfair competition of the English servants and their Indian agents, who refused to pay any dues. Mir Kasim made bitter complaints. Vansittart and Hastings tried to make a reasonable arrangement with him; but the majority in Council would not agree. Finally Mir Kasim decided to abolish all dues, in order to give his subjects a chance. Thereupon the majority, despite the protests of Vansittart and Hastings, simply ordered him to re-establish the dues for all traders save themselves. Mir Kasim could stand no more, and broke into revolt (1763), unhappily staining his reputation, at the end, by the brutal murder of a number of Englishmen who fell into his hands. His new army was twice defeated; but it fought with a gallantry and skill to which the British troops were unaccustomed. Defeated and hopeless, Mir Kasim fled across the borders into the neighbouring State of Oudh; the triumphant king-makers haled out old Mir Jafar, and restored him to the throne; and Vansittart and Hastings returned to England in disgust.

The Nawab of Oudh saw in the confusion of Bengal an opportunity of extending his power, and invaded the province with a large army. With him came the Mogul Emperor, who was now an exile from Delhi, and had taken refuge with his nominal vassal. In theory the Mogul had

the right to appoint whom he would to the throne of Bengal ; and his presence, and that of Mir Kasim, with the army of Oudh made the invasion doubly formidable. But a small British army under Major Munro met and utterly defeated the invaders at the battle of Buxar (1764) ; and both the Nawab of Oudh and his nominal master the Mogul were at the mercy of the Company.

These episodes showed that the power of the Company in Bengal, as hitherto exercised, was a mere curse. The Company was an Old Man of the Sea ; and, like Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea, it could not be shaken off. The battle of Buxar, more clearly even than the battle of Plassey, marked the definite establishment of British supremacy in Bengal. What is more, it placed Oudh also at the disposal of the Company ; and the irresponsible group of servants who represented it were quite prepared to partition that country and to take the Mogul himself under their protection.

§ 2. *Clive's Reform Scheme of 1765 and its Failure.*

Meanwhile the Company at home, indignant at the misbehaviour of its servants, had determined, as soon as the news of Mir Kasim's revolt reached England, that drastic changes must be made ; and to carry them out Clive, now Lord Clive, was appointed to the Governorship. He arrived in Bengal in 1765 to find that in the meanwhile Buxar had been fought, and that he had therefore to settle not only the affairs of Bengal, but also those of the Mogul and of Oudh. The field was clear for a large policy of reconstruction, and for a new definition of the relations between the Company and the Indian Powers ; moreover the fact that the Mogul himself was now in British hands made it possible to give an air of legitimacy to the new arrangements.

The arrangements made by Clive in 1765 have always been regarded as marking a turning-point in the history of the British power in India ; but they did so in form rather than in fact. In the first place, Clive took the penniless and wandering Mogul Emperor under the protection of the Company, promised him an annual tribute of £260,000 from Bengal, and provided him with a territory of his own by cutting off Allahabad and other lands from Oudh ; at Allahabad the Mogul would be within easy reach of Bengal.¹ In the second place he made an alliance with the Nawab of

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 61 (a), 6th Edition Plate 65 (a).

Oudh, to whom he restored the rest of his lands ; Oudh remained a dependent ally of the Company for nearly a hundred years, until the separate existence of the State was suppressed in 1856. In the third place he legitimised the position of the Company in Bengal by obtaining from the Mogul a grant to the Company of the *diwani*, or right of collecting the revenues in that province. Under the Mogul system of government, in its best days, each great province had had two heads, the Nawab being responsible for military and police affairs, while the Diwan was responsible for the collection of revenue. This system had broken down during the years of confusion. In theory it was now restored, and a system of 'dual government,' divided between the Nawab and the Company, was established : the Company, as Diwan, undertaking to pay, out of the revenues it collected, a fixed annual sum to the Nawab for the expenses of government, in addition to the tribute to the Mogul. Finally Clive tried to restrict the abuses of private trading, and sought a compensation for the Company's servants by establishing a monopoly of salt, the profits of which were to be divided among them ; but the Company refused to accept the arrangement. He had grave trouble both with the civil servants and with the military officers in the Company's employ. Even his immense prestige and courage could not wholly keep them in check.

Clive's scheme of dual government lasted for only seven years. But it was a failure from the first. The spheres of the Nawab and the Company were not clearly enough marked out, and perhaps could not have been exactly defined. The Nawab did not, in practice, exercise the military power which theoretically belonged to him, because real military power necessarily remained with the Company ; and, for this reason, it was almost impossible for him to maintain order. Mir Jafar had died, and as his successor was a minor, the powers of the Nawab were in fact exercised by a deputy, Mohammed Reza Khan, who was nominated by the Company. Moreover the Company did not itself attempt to exercise the functions of the *diwani*, because it did not wish its servants to be diverted from commercial business. It was content to transfer all these functions to Mohammed Reza Khan, with the title of Naib (or deputy) Diwan. This Indian noble was therefore at once deputy for the Nawab and deputy for the Company ; and the nominal duality of the system was thus made unreal from

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the outset ; Bengal was governed by Mohammed Reza Khan, subject to the dictation of the Company.

Under these circumstances the new arrangements were not a whit better than the old. Indeed, they were worse. For the Nawab, now a mere puppet, lost all authority in the eyes of his subjects ; Mohammed Reza Khan knew that his position was insecure, and that he depended upon the favour of the Company's servants, and therefore dared not act with vigour ; whilst the Company's servants had as little sense of responsibility as before for the good government of Bengal. The only differences were, first that £260,000 a year had to be sent to the Mogul, which had not been sent before ; and secondly that the Company, having acquired control of the revenues of Bengal, expected to make large profits from this source, though these revenues were all needed, and ought to have been used, for the provision of good government in Bengal. So great were the expectations of profit from this source that the shareholders of the Company at home insisted upon having their dividends increased ; whilst the home Government also insisted upon having a share. In 1767 Charles Townshend, Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Chatham's Government, obtained an Act of Parliament requiring the Company to pay £400,000 per annum to the British Government. This was the first interference of Parliament in the affairs of the East India Company. It showed that Parliament had as yet no idea of the magnitude and difficulty of the problem presented by the situation in Bengal, and that it had reached no loftier ideal than that of sharing in the plunder of a conquered province.

The seven years from 1765 to 1772 form, indeed, the darkest period in the history of the British power in India, and Clive's attempt to invent a device for regularising the Company's ascendancy without thrusting administrative duties upon its servants only made bad worse. Clive's successor, Verelst, though an honest and well-meaning man, could not keep his subordinates under control. The evils of private trade were as bad as ever. Mohammed Reza Khan, as Deputy Nawab, was unable to maintain order, and the system of local administration and justice, never efficient, fell into chaos. Nor was he much more successful in revenue administration, in his capacity as Deputy Diwan for the Company ; the Company found that the revenue from which it had expected so much was steadily shrinking, while the country was becoming more and more impoverished.

In 1769, in a desperate attempt to improve matters, the Company appointed English supervisors to each of the thirty-six districts, to see that the collections of revenue were properly made. This is important as the first direct interference of English officers in local administration. But the supervisors (who were mostly junior and inexperienced men) had no direct responsibility, and they were tempted to abuse their authority for their own advantage.

§ 3. *The Threatened Collapse of the Company's Power.*

In 1770 there came a culmination to all this misery in the most appalling famine that had ever visited the country. At least one-third of the population died of starvation. It was nobody's business to organise relief: that was not in the Indian tradition of government. But the callousness with which, in the midst of this hideous suffering, the land revenue was still exacted from the starving peasantry, and the horrible rumour that Englishmen were using the opportunity to make huge profits by hoarding corn, aroused anger and indignation at home, and made it clear both to the Company and to the British Government that drastic and sweeping reforms were necessary.

Meanwhile alarming events had been happening in Southern India. The Governor and Council of Madras, who were in no way under the control of the Governor of Calcutta, had got themselves into an inextricable tangle with the Indian Powers of the South.¹ They had allowed themselves to be drawn by the Nizam of Hyderabad into a wholly unnecessary war with Hyder Ali, a formidable Mussulman adventurer who had recently established himself on the throne of Mysore, whence he commanded all the passes leading to the low-lying and defenceless coast land of the Carnatic. In 1769 Hyder Ali burst down into the low country, slaying and devastating. Expecting an easy victory, Madras had made no preparations and possessed no adequate forces. It had to draw upon Bengal; and the supply of troops and money for this dreary and disastrous war completed the disorganisation of the Company's finances.

In addition to these difficulties the great confederacy of the Mahrattas, whose territories spread from West to East across India, was again becoming dangerous. Their power had been temporarily broken by their defeat at the hands of the Afghans in 1761,² and this had perhaps alone ren-

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 61 (a), 6th Edition Plate 65 (a).

² Vol. I. p. 766.

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dered possible the establishment of British power in Bengal. But they were once more becoming active and aggressive. They had made themselves masters of Delhi,¹ and in 1771 they invited the exiled Mogul, who had remained at Allahabad under the protection of the Company since 1765, to return to the capital of his ancestors. The Mogul had accepted the invitation, only to find himself a prisoner, and a puppet in the hands of the Mahrattas. Possession of the person of the Mogul had become, as it were, the symbol of sovereignty in India: he could give to his gaolers *firman*s and edicts which would cover their usurpations with a semblance of legitimacy. In the name of the Mogul the Mahrattas were soon (1772) to demand that the tribute from Bengal should be paid to them, and that Allahabad and the rich adjoining lands should be placed in their hands. From Delhi they were also (1771) threatening Rohilkhand,² a country immediately to the north-west of Oudh, which had been conquered by the Rohillas, a tribe of Afghan raiders, during the confusion of the last half-century. The Rohillas appealed to the Nawab of Oudh for aid, promising large sums in return; and the threat of an advance by the Nawab's army, supported by a British brigade under the terms of Clive's alliance with Oudh, caused the Mahrattas to withdraw for the moment. But it was only for the moment. And if they overran Rohilkhand, and at the same time got possession of Allahabad, Oudh would lie absolutely at their mercy. Unless the Company were prepared to defend it—and how could this be possible in the then state of its affairs?—Oudh would become a vassal to the Mahrattas instead of to the Company; and the most formidable and aggressive of all the Indian Powers would be brought into immediate neighbourhood with Bengal. This Mahratta danger, which was scarcely at all understood in England, formed the most serious threat to the Company's position. Taken in conjunction with the peril from Hyder Ali in the South, it seemed to promise that their recently established territorial power would be overthrown as swiftly as it had been created.

But it was not these political dangers which most weighed upon the Company, but rather the ugly misgovernment of Bengal, and the threatened collapse of its finances, within seven years of the glowing prospects raised by Clive in 1765. In 1772 bankruptcy was in sight. Far from being able to pay to Government the £400,000 which had been exacted in

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 61 (a), 6th Edition Plate 65 (a).

² *Ibid.*

1767, the Company had to borrow £1,000,000 from Government in order to maintain solvency. Its shares fell in a most alarming way. And, what was more serious, everybody in England had by this time realised that the growth of British power, as the Company had wielded it, had not only brought disaster to the Company itself, but had brought nothing but misery and oppression to the regions over which its influence extended. Thus in twelve years the glowing hopes which had been raised by Clive's victories had disappeared in gloom and shame. Power without responsibility had been proved to be ruinous to the rulers as well as to the ruled; and it had become plain that the British people must face seriously the new and strange responsibility which events had thrust upon them in the East.

In these desperate circumstances the Company came at last to the decision that it must assume direct responsibility for the administration of Bengal, at any rate in regard to the functions of the *diwani*, or collection of revenue. To carry out this change it appointed to the Governorship the one man who had come out of the earlier troubles of Bengal with clean hands; the one man who had shown sympathy with the needs of the Indian peoples, and had resisted the oppression of his colleagues. This man was Warren Hastings. He had come home with Vansittart in 1764, a comparatively poor man. For five years, though he had lost such money as he had saved, the Company had refused to give him employment; but since 1769 he had been at work in Madras, reorganising with remarkable success the Company's trading system. He had thus had no share in the misrule of the period of dual government. In January 1772 Warren Hastings arrived in Bengal to undertake his herculean task—a task even more difficult than the Company supposed. With his arrival began a new era in the history of the British power in India: an era in which that power was to be turned from a curse into a blessing.

[Muir, *Making of British India*; Roberts, *Hist. Geography of India*; V. A. Smith, *Oxford History of India*; Lyall, *Rise and Expansion of the British Power in India*; Forrest, *Life of Clive*; Gleig, *Warren Hastings*; Vansittart, *Narrative of Events in Bengal*; Monckton Jones, *Hastings in Bengal*]

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTROVERSY WITH THE AMERICAN COLONIES

(A.D. 1763-1775)

§ 1. *The Factors of the Problem.*

THE difficulty and complexity of the problem of government in India dawned but slowly upon the minds of British statesmen, and reached an acute stage with unexpected suddenness. The yet more difficult problem of colonial government in America developed more gradually; but even to the end its full significance was never realised. For the question was one which had never emerged in human history before. It was the question whether a family of free communities could find a mode of attaining a real unity without impairing the freedom of any member. Britain and the American colonies formed the only linked group of free communities that had ever existed in the world on such a scale; and the necessity of recasting their relationships emerged so suddenly that the character of the problem was not clearly realised on either side of the Atlantic. There was prolonged controversy, which grew more acrimonious, and led in the end to a tragic disruption of the fellowship of freedom.

What made the tragedy more remarkable was that it followed so closely upon the intoxicating triumphs of the Seven Years' War. Indeed, it was in several ways directly due to these triumphs. Until 1763 the danger from France had held the members of the Commonwealth together; and more than one observer had predicted that if ever this danger were removed, the colonies would strive for independence. Again, the immense new area, stretching from the Alleghanies to the Mississippi, which had been transferred to Britain by the Peace of Paris,¹ presented problems of real difficulty. This area lay outside the limits of the existing colonies. It was inhabited by Indian tribes, who had to be at once protected and held in check. This function, which naturally fell to the imperial Government, necessitated a greater degree of interference in American

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 55, 6th Edition Plate 63.

affairs than had hitherto been usual, and involved a considerable new expense which the mother-country was unwilling to bear. Finally, the French danger had kept in the background the defects and difficulties of the imperial system under which the Commonwealth had been directed since 1660. Not that these defects were not earlier apparent. They had been very clearly exhibited during the first half of the century. But the Whigs, who might have reorganised the system, had been content to shut their eyes and let things drift—an attitude for which their successors took credit as if it had been a device of profound political wisdom. When the war came to an end in 1763 the bad working of the system was so obvious that whoever had been in power would have been bound to deal with it, and could not have dealt with it without arousing friction and controversy. It was to George Grenville, an honest, unimaginative, hard-working and rather pedantic man, that this difficult task of reconstruction in the first instance fell.

There were difficulties of three kinds : difficulties arising from the system of government, difficulties arising from the regulation of imperial trade, and difficulties arising from the problem of colonial defence and from the organisation of the new territories with their Indian tribes. In regard to all these questions both the colonies and the mother-country had their grievances.

The system of government generally characteristic of the colonies was that while the executive was in the hands of a Governor appointed by the Crown and a nominated Executive Council, a representative assembly elected by the colonists had control over legislation and taxation ; and this was held to be as nearly as possible a reproduction of the system prevailing at home. Now, although no Governor dared defy his assembly, this system did in fact deny to the colonists complete responsibility for the management of their own affairs ; and as it is the natural tendency of liberty to strive for its own fulfilment, it was inevitable that the colonists should desire to gain control over their executive government. A body which is denied responsibility is apt to become irresponsible ; and the form which the struggle of the colonial legislatures for an increase of their power had assumed, in several colonies, had been a refusal of fixed regular salaries to the Governor and to the judges as a means of bringing them under control. This was felt by the home Government to impair the dignity and freedom of

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action of these officers : in the case of the judges it dangerously threatened judicial independence, especially as the judges often had to decide upon smuggling cases on which popular opinion was hostile to the laws. Thus there was some soreness on both sides. But the main point was that just because the colonies were, by the gift of the mother-country, almost the freest societies in the world, they were bound to strive for the completion of their own political liberties. The question of official salaries did not overtly play any prominent part in the controversy, but the demand for greater independence and responsibility which was implied by it underlay the whole dispute.

Closely connected with this question was the further question whether the British Parliament had the right to legislate for or to tax the colonies over the heads of their assemblies. In formal constitutional law there could be little doubt that such a right existed ; if it did not exist, there was no common legislative authority for the whole empire. But except in regard to the regulation of foreign trade (where it was never seriously questioned) the issue had never been definitely raised on either side. If and when such a power was seriously asserted it was certain that the colonists would be up in arms. But it is essential to remember that apart from the British Government and Parliament there was no common authority for the thirteen colonies. They were so much attached to their local independence that they had refused to have anything to do with the scheme of federation which had been drawn up by their own representatives in 1754.¹ Yet they had many interests in common ; and the only way in which these common interests could be attended to was that the home Government should co-ordinate the action of the colonies through its control over their Governors. Thus the possibility of common action, which was necessary for many purposes and notably for the management of the new territories, depended upon the exercise of the authority of the Crown, of which the colonists were very jealous. Evidently the problem of colonial government was no easy one.

The problem of trade relationships was not less difficult. Ever since 1660 the unity of the British Empire had mainly depended upon the ties of trade, and upon the maintenance of a uniform system of trading regulations. The main principles of the system were : (1) that inter-imperial trade should be carried only in British or colonial ships ; (2) that

¹ Vol. I. p. 722.

some of the most important products of the colonies should be exported only to Britain, which thus became, for these goods, the market for the rest of the world; (3) that goods from other countries should only be imported to the colonies through Britain, where dues were levied upon them; and (4) that colonial produce should have a monopoly or a strong preference in British markets.

It has often been said that this system was conceived wholly in the interests of the mother-country. But that is not a just view. The aim of the system was to promote the prosperity of all the members of the Commonwealth by encouraging them to play their parts in a carefully planned economic system. It is certain that the colonies had derived great advantages from the system in some ways, though they may have suffered in others. The limitation of imperial trade to British and colonial ships had fostered the growth of a very active shipping trade in New England. The dues levied on foreign goods destined for the colonies were generally refunded, except in the case of goods which directly competed with British goods. The facts that colonial tobacco, coffee, sugar and rice had a monopoly of the British market, and that other colonial products enjoyed very substantial preferences, and in many cases received bounties from the British treasury, formed a solid compensation for the limitation of the export of certain articles to Britain. Though exact computation is impossible, the advantages and disadvantages of the system were about equally felt on both sides.

On the other hand the trade regulations were imposed by the authority of the British Parliament, the only common legislative authority for the whole Commonwealth; and while no serious protest had yet been made against the exercise of this authority, it manifestly formed a restriction of the self-government of the colonies. The British Parliament was naturally more awake to the economic needs of Britain than to those of the colonies. Its powers might be used for purposes of exploitation; and in some of the legislation of the Whig period—notably the attempt to prohibit certain colonial manufactures¹—this spirit had been ominously present. These prohibitions were not, and could not be, effectively enforced; but the mere fact that they had been thought of made it possible to assert that the trade system was devised in the interests of the mother-country. Taken as a whole, however, the system

¹ Vol. I. p. 696.

worked reasonably well, and was accepted without resentment by the colonists ; though of course there was a considerable amount of illicit trade.

But there was one great exception to this acceptance. A very active trade had sprung up between the New England colonies and the French West Indian Islands, to which corn, cattle, and other produce were exported in exchange for molasses and sugar. This trade, which was entirely legal until 1733, provided an outlet for some of the principal products of the northern colonies. In the interests of the British West Indian Islands, Walpole had endeavoured to put an end to it by the Molasses Act of 1733, which imposed prohibitive duties on foreign sugar imported into any of the British lands—a prohibition which of course applied to Britain equally with the colonies. From the first the New Englanders had defied this law, and had carried on so vigorous a smuggling trade with the French West Indies that the Act had been almost a dead letter. To maintain laws that cannot be enforced is always unwise, because it encourages the habit of disrespect for law : yet Walpole and his successors had kept the Molasses Act in existence without seriously endeavouring to enforce it. The Act itself was felt as a grievance by the colonists ; their open defiance of it was felt as a grievance by the home Government. And grievance became indignation when, during the war with France, the colonists insisted upon keeping up this traffic. Pitt's generals complained bitterly that while they could not buy adequate supplies for their troops, the stores they needed were being openly exported to the enemy, who would have collapsed without them. Pitt himself had been compelled to take strong measures against this illicit trade ; and the anger which it had excited in England still survived when, at the close of the war, Grenville took up the colonial question, of which the enforcement of the trade regulations formed a very important aspect.

But it was the problem of colonial defence that seemed most urgent in 1763. The war just ended had left Britain burdened with a debt so colossal in the eyes of that generation that many financiers, and among them George Grenville, believed that there was an imminent danger of national bankruptcy. This debt had been mainly incurred in defending the colonies from a very grave peril ; and in the struggle against this peril the colonists themselves had, in the judgment of most Englishmen, been extraordinarily backward. They had refused to take common action.

Most of the individual colonies had been strangely reluctant to provide either men or money, even when the enemy was pressing on their borders. It had only been when Pitt had undertaken to defray out of the British exchequer almost the whole burden of equipping them that anything like adequate contingents had been raised in most of the colonies, some of which were meanwhile making large profits by trading with the enemy. Moreover, the continued security of the colonies against the real danger of a renewed French attack depended wholly upon the supremacy of the British fleet, which formed a heavy burden on Britain, and towards which the colonies made no contribution whatsoever.

Finally there was still need for local defence, even though the French danger had been removed. The vast regions between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi, full of warlike Indian tribes, had to be policed, and the Indians had to be protected against unfair treatment by traders and land-speculators. Much attention was given to this question by every British Government from 1763 to 1775. In 1763 a proclamation was issued forbidding the purchase of lands from Indians except under stringent conditions, and the greater part of the new territories west of the Alleghanies were marked off as an Indian reserve. A clear and consistent Indian policy was very necessary; for the Indians were in a dangerous state of excitement, having been stirred up by the war, and in 1763-4 an alarming rising broke out, which is known as the Conspiracy of Pontiac. The border districts of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia were devastated; and these States were only saved from a worse fate by the presence of British forces. This alarming episode had once more shown that, while the colonies had no means of common action, they were individually unorganised, and unwilling to organise themselves, for their own defence. For the safety of the whole group, and for the policing of the new territory, it seemed to be necessary to maintain a small permanent British force, the annual cost of which was estimated at £350,000. Even if the colonists were not to be asked to make any contribution to the burden of debt which had largely been incurred on their behalf, or to the cost of the fleet which safeguarded them from a possible French attack (and nobody proposed that they should be asked for money for these purposes), it seemed reasonable that they should be called upon to defray the cost of the small force maintained for their pro-

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tection, and rendered necessary in part by their own refusal to adopt any adequate means for self-defence.

This at any rate was how the situation appeared to George Grenville and his colleagues when, on the conclusion of peace, they addressed themselves to the colonial problem. In the forefront of their minds were two questions : first, colonial defence and the organisation of the new territories ; secondly, the notorious and wholesale evasion of the trade laws, more particularly of the Molasses Act. They cannot fairly be blamed for their failure to see, what none of their contemporaries either in England or in America perceived, that the old colonial system had in fact broken down, and needed to be radically reconstructed on the basis of a great enlargement of colonial autonomy, combined with some system of co-operation for common needs.

§ 2. Grenville's Policy : the Stamp Act and its Repeal.

While, therefore, the Board of Trade took in hand the working out of a plan for dealing with the new territories, which involved a substantial new outlay, Grenville undertook a careful revision of the whole system of trade regulations. Embodied in over a hundred Acts of Parliament, these regulations had grown up piecemeal, and had never been systematically overhauled. Grenville revised many of the duties with a view to giving the maximum possible encouragement to colonial production ; he increased the number of bounties offered from the British exchequer on the export of various colonial products ; he added some new items to the list of enumerated articles which could only be exported to Britain ; he practically destroyed a profitable British trade with the Danish whale-fishers of Greenland, in order to stimulate the infant whale fisheries of New England. And he altered the character of the Molasses Act. In place of the prohibitive duties imposed by that Act, which would, if the Act had been observed, have destroyed the trade between New England and the French West Indies, he substituted moderate duties, which allowed the trade to be carried on legitimately, and might be expected to yield some revenue towards the cost of colonial defence. Grenville, in short, made an honest and intelligent attempt to revise and improve the old trade system, having in view the prosperity of the colonies as well as that of Britain ; and unless he had been prepared to propose a complete abandonment of the system, which nobody either in Britain or America advo-

cated, it is difficult to see how he could have done better. In order to make the trade regulations effective, he followed the methods which Pitt had begun, of employing the navy to prevent smuggling; and as the juries of the ordinary courts in America usually refused to find a verdict in smuggling cases, he established a Court of Admiralty for America, where such cases could be tried.

The stricter enforcement of the trade laws, and the revised scale of dues, were expected to bring in some revenue, which would form a contribution towards the cost of colonial defence and the administration of the new territories. But the total yield (of which a large part would be paid by the West Indies) would be only sufficient to supply about one-seventh of the estimated outlay. How was the balance to be got? The colonists generally recognised that it was fair that this outlay should be met by themselves. But the colonies would not combine to tax themselves in common; and they had always failed to make fair contributions individually. The only alternative was that a tax should be imposed by the authority of the imperial Parliament, and this course had been urged by some of the colonial Governors, and by some of the agents appointed by the colonists to represent them in England. Grenville accordingly proposed that stamps should be required for certain legal documents—a form of taxation as unoppressive and as easily levied as could readily be devised. He made this proposal in 1764, but allowed a year for the colonists to put forward any alternative proposals. None were suggested. Accordingly, in 1765, the famous Stamp Act was passed, practically without opposition, through the British Parliament; neither Chatham nor the Whigs nor the colonial agents in London raising any objections. The Act provided that every penny so raised should be spent on colonial defence. Its yield was only estimated at £100,000, part of which would be paid by the West Indies, so that more than half the cost of the local defence of the colonies, as well as the whole cost of the navy and the whole burden of the debt, would still fall upon the British exchequer. It cannot be pretended that there was anything tyrannical or oppressive in these proposals, or that £100,000 would form an unreasonably heavy burden upon the thirteen thriving settlements. The very moderation of the proposals made it plain that any opposition to them would be an opposition to the principle of the Act, rather than to the burden which it imposed.

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The passage of the Stamp Act produced a wholly unexpected outcry in America—an outcry which was certainly intensified, and perhaps mainly caused, by the unpopularity of the strict enforcement of the trade laws. The colonial leaders everywhere repudiated the right of the British Parliament to impose direct taxation upon them: 'no taxation without representation' became their cry, and the same doctrine was proclaimed by Chatham and others in England. Yet the trade regulations, whose validity the colonists had never denied, involved taxation; and to get out of this dilemma they and their British friends were forced to draw an untenable distinction between 'external' taxation, which was in their view legitimate, and 'internal' taxation, which was tyrannical. In truth, the colonists had, in mere logic and law, a difficult case to uphold, despite the ingenuity and learning with which they maintained it. But mere logic and law are dangerous guides. They felt, and rightly felt, that they were defending one of the essentials of self-government, for the whole constitutional history of England taught the lesson that the control of the purse is the foundation of political liberty.

While, however, the colonists were determined not to have the Stamp Act, nobody had any suggestions to make as to what alternative course Grenville ought to have pursued, or how the money could be raised for the cost of colonial defence. The lawyers devoted themselves to ingenious and wise-drawn arguments; the orators confined themselves to impassioned speeches about tyranny and slavery and chains; and their hearers, wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, broke into rioting and mob violence. The Act simply could not be enforced. What was more, the colonists began to enter into agreements to boycott British goods; and British merchants at home, seeing their trade threatened, began to clamour for the repeal of the Act.

Evidently the Act had to be repealed. Evidently the British taxpayer would have to go on bearing the whole burden of colonial defence. The weak and short-lived Whig ministry which succeeded Grenville repealed the Act (1766). The systematic plan for policing the new territories was dropped. And the clamour in America died down. But with the repeal was coupled a Declaratory Act, asserting the power of the British Parliament to impose laws or taxes on the colonies. This unqualified assertion of principle played into the hands of that section of colonial opinion, as yet small, but full of vigour, which was aiming at complete

independence, though it did not yet venture to say so. It also showed that the Whigs at all events had no conception of the necessity for a thorough-going reconsideration and recast of British colonial policy. It was not yet too late ; a conference of representative colonists, discussing the problem with a group of British leaders, might have arrived at some solution. But alas ! this idea occurred to no one. The problem was left to be decided by the wisdom of Westminster ; and the country gentlemen of England, who had not forgotten things that had happened during the late war, and who were indignant at the violence and misrepresentation of the opposition to the Stamp Act, were beginning to lose their patience.

§ 3. *The Second Project of Taxation : the Boston Tea Riot.*

The Whig ministry was succeeded by Lord Chatham's ministry ; and Lord Chatham was the proclaimed friend of the colonies, their idol during the late war. Surely his Government might be expected to face the issue ? It set out with the intention of doing so ; and Lord Shelburne worked out a new and ambitious scheme for developing the Western Territories. Unhappily Lord Chatham's was a non-party ministry ; that is to say, its members had no principles in common. The most brilliant and irresponsible among them, Charles Townshend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, delighted the House of Commons by promising to find a way of taxing the colonies to which the colonists could not object. They repudiated internal taxation, but admitted the legality of external taxation. They should therefore have external taxation ; and in 1767 Townshend proposed, and Parliament readily accepted, a series of new duties on tea and other goods imported into America.

The colonial protest was as vigorous as before. According to the words of the Act itself, the new duties were imposed for the purpose of raising revenue, not for the purpose of regulating trade ; and it was precisely the assertion of a power to raise revenue to which they objected. In most of the colonies non-importation agreements for the boycotting of British trade were widely adhered to. Massachusetts, as always, took the lead in resistance ; its Assembly sent out a letter inviting all the other colonies to combine ; and being thereupon dissolved by the Governor, it continued to sit as a convention, and to organise and guide public feeling, in open defiance of the regular Government. So dangerous was the temper of Boston that in 1768 two regiments were sent

from Halifax to be quartered in the town. But the townsmen refused to find quarters for them; and a town's meeting, on the transparent pretext of a possible French invasion, requested all citizens to equip themselves with arms. The inevitable friction which followed between the excited townspeople and the harassed troops led, not unnaturally, to an affray (1770), in which three people were killed. The episode was denounced as the Boston Massacre, and became the theme of anniversary orations on the brutal tyranny of the mother-country.

In face of these difficulties, and lest worse should come, the British Government decided that it was necessary to give way. In March, 1770, all the duties were withdrawn except that on tea; and the retention of the duty on tea was only decided by a majority of one in the cabinet. This was an obvious, if clumsy, attempt at conciliation. Had it been met by any sort of advance from the other side there might still have been a solution of the controversy. But the leaders in the colonies, at any rate in Massachusetts, were not only determined to have no compromise, they were becoming daily bolder in the assertion of principles which were essentially inconsistent with the maintenance of any part of the old ties. 'We know of no Commissioners of His Majesty's Customs,' said the Massachusetts Assembly in 1771; and this was equivalent to a complete repudiation of the whole trade system. On the other hand, the great majority of members of the British Parliament were on their side rapidly losing all patience. To them it appeared that what the colonists demanded was that they should enjoy all the advantages, and bear no part of the burdens, of the imperial connexion; that they should enjoy bounties and preferences in the British market, and be left free to evade all restrictions on their own trade; that they should enjoy imperial protection, but throw all the cost on the British taxpayer. Such a state of things seemed to them intolerable; and this view was probably shared by the great majority of the British public. There can be no reasonable doubt that public opinion acquiesced in the policy of the King and his Government. On both sides a sense of injustice and resentment was embittering the great debate; and the possibility of a sober and reasonable adjustment was waning.

Nevertheless the resistance in America, and even in Massachusetts, its chief centre, showed signs of becoming weaker. The colonists were finding it hard to do without

imported British goods, and their boycott of these goods was becoming less effective. During the five years from 1769 to 1773 there was comparative quiescence, and the leaders of the resistance found it impossible to keep popular excitement at the pitch which it had reached in 1765 and in 1768: for when all was said, an addition of 3d. in the pound to the duty on tea (which formed the whole of the British oppression) was not in itself a very obvious sign of slavery, and it was hard for the ordinary man to keep himself in a passion, year after year, on such a matter. But in 1773 an event happened which quite unexpectedly fanned the flames again.

Partly in the hope of relieving the distress of the East India Company, and partly with the idea of finally breaking down the non-importation agreements, and persuading the Americans to drink even the obnoxious taxed tea, Lord North introduced an Act permitting the East India Company to export its tea direct to America. Hitherto it had been sent through England, where it had paid a duty of 1s., the additional Townshend duty of 3d. being levied at the American customs-houses. Now it would pay the 3d. only; the Americans would get their tea cheaper than before Townshend's time, and cheaper than it could be got in England. In reality this marked a complete victory for the Americans. But their leaders did not so regard it. They looked upon it as an insidious trick to persuade their followers to buy the taxed article; and they feared that many would do so. Consignments of tea were sent under the new rules to four American ports. At three of them the vendors were peaceably persuaded to withdraw the tea from sale. But at Boston a town-meeting was summoned, to declare that this was 'the last, worst, and most destructive measure of Government,' and that those who landed the tea would be 'treated as wretches unworthy to live.' No one proposed to force the people of Boston to buy the tea; they were free to let it rot in the warehouses, as the people of Charleston did. But this was not enough. On December 16, 1773, a band of men, in the darkness of night, and carefully disguised as Red Indians, boarded the ships, and threw the property of the East India Company into the harbour.

The Boston tea riot was a deliberate defiance of the laws; it was a proof that the regular Government was powerless in the city. When the news reached England it produced a fierce outburst of anger. It made reconciliation almost impossible, as perhaps it was intended to do; for it is significant that in this same autumn of 1773 Samuel Adams, the

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real leader of the Bostonians, had published three letters in a Boston paper openly advocating independence. In March 1774 Lord North introduced a series of penal measures. One of these closed the port of Boston, and removed the custom-house to Salem until compensation should have been paid for the tea. Another, having in view the difficulty of enforcing obedience to the laws, vested in the Crown the appointment of all judicial officers, and made it possible to bring offenders to England for trial. But the most important of these enactments was one which cancelled the charter of Massachusetts and revised its system of government. This strange folly had the most dire effects. It was the first act of the British Government which seemed to afford real and solid evidence that its aim was the destruction of American liberty. It drove the colonists to unite. It played into the hands of those, hitherto a small minority, who desired, and had been working for, independence. In Massachusetts the Assembly, being declared dissolved, refused to disperse, and sat at Concord, practically constituting itself a rebel government; while General Gage, commander of the troops in Boston, who had been appointed Governor, began to fortify the town.

Meanwhile a Congress of all the colonies except Georgia had met at Philadelphia; the union of the States, which the needs of common defence had hitherto failed to bring about, was welded by common opposition to the motherland. The Congress sent a petition to the King in which, while protesting its loyalty, it demanded the withdrawal of all the recent acts of Government, and placed upon them an interpretation which few people in England would be likely to accept. It also drew up a strongly worded Declaration of Rights. But it made no proposals for dealing with the actual problems out of which all these troubles had arisen, and gave no indication of what it would regard as a satisfactory readjustment of relations if the unity of the Commonwealth was still to be maintained. When John Galloway proposed a scheme of federal organisation which would be able to deal with common problems, raise a common revenue, and therefore dispense with the necessity for the intervention of the British Parliament, his proposal, which would almost certainly have been welcomed in Britain, was rejected by a substantial majority. The attitude of Congress was in fact entirely negative and critical, not constructive. On the other hand the British Parliament had, with its penal legislation, now taken up a position to which the colonies

could never be expected to assent. It had asserted, in effect, that the representative institutions of the colonies lay at its mercy. A position of deadlock had been reached.

§ 4. *Attempts at Conciliation.*

In Britain the immediate result was a revival of the vigour of the opposition ; and the two most powerful political intelligences then existing in England, Chatham and Burke, feeling the gravity of the crisis, and shocked at the prospect of a violent disruption of the commonwealth of freedom, threw themselves into the attempt to find, even at the last moment, some way out of the *impasse*. Chatham drafted a scheme of conciliation in consultation with Benjamin Franklin ; but it had no chance of acceptance on either side, now that tempers were high. Burke delivered two noble orations in the House of Commons, the second of which advocated a series of reconciling resolutions. These speeches showed the profound political wisdom, the insight, and the imagination of the greatest of English political thinkers at their highest ; and as an analysis of the conditions which had produced the controversy they were unsurpassable. Burke implored his hearers to sweep away all formulæ and theories of abstract right from their minds, and to remember only that the common enjoyment of political liberty was the true bond which linked together the members of the Commonwealth, and that the colonists were standing for what they believed to be essential to their liberties. With profound and noble eloquence he appealed to the spirit of freedom as the guardian spirit of the British Commonwealth ; and because his inspiration gave the first clear and open exposition of a great ideal that had hitherto been unconsciously followed, his speech was itself a great event in the history of the Commonwealth, even though it failed of its immediate purpose.

‘My hold of the colonies,’ he proclaimed, ‘is in the close affection which grows from common names, from kindred blood, from similar privileges and equal protection. These are ties which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron. Let the colonists always keep the idea of their civil rights as associated with your government ;—they will cling and grapple to you ; and no force under heaven will be of power to tear them from their allegiance. . . . As long as you have the wisdom to keep the sovereign authority of this country as the sanctuary of liberty, the sacred temple consecrated to our common faith, wherever the chosen race and sons of England worship freedom, they will

turn their faces towards you. . . . Deny them this participation of freedom, and you break that sole bond, which originally made, and must still preserve, the unity of the Empire. . . . Do not dream that your letters of office, and your instructions, and your suspending clauses are the things that hold together the great contexture of the mysterious whole. These things do not make your government. Dead instruments, passive tools as they are, it is the spirit of the English communion that gives all their life and efficacy to them. It is the spirit of the English constitution which, infused through the mighty mass, pervades, feeds, unites, invigorates, vivifies every part of the empire, even down to the minutest member.'

These are noble and prophetic words. But they provided no solution, nor did the resolutions which they advocated provide any solution, for the actual problems out of which all the trouble had arisen. Lord North also, with the King's approval, tried his hand at conciliation, proposing that any colony which should make a contribution towards the cost of defence which Parliament thought adequate should be exempted from all taxes and duties. But it was too late. Some of the Americans, and these the most active and aggressive, had already made up their minds that they wanted independence. Others had convinced themselves that the British Government harboured deep designs of oppression. In Britain the great majority of men believed that the colonists had been unfair, that they were shirking reasonable obligations, and that their high words about tyranny and slavery were an intolerable and insulting perversion of the facts. Believing so, they listened with impatience to Burke, not rejecting his ideals, but regarding him as a dreamer; they were impatient even of Lord North's efforts at conciliation. And with such a temper reigning on both sides of the Atlantic, only one end to the dispute was possible: a decision by brute force.

On April 19, 1775, the first shots were fired in a skirmish at Lexington, between the British troops in Boston, and the militiamen who had long been drilling under the orders of the Massachusetts Assembly. The dismemberment of the Commonwealth by civil war had begun.

[Lecky, *History of England in the 18th Century*; Channing, *History of the United States*; Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of America*; Beer, *British Colonial Policy, 1754-1765*; Dickerson, *American Colonial Government*; Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the Revolution*; Alvord, *Mississippi Valley in British Politics*; Van Toyne, *American Revolution*; Trevelyan, *American Revolution* (for the traditional Whig view); Burke, speeches on American Taxation and on Conciliation with America; Parkman, *Conspiracy of Pontiac*.]

CHAPTER V

THE WAR OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

(A.D. 1775-1783)

§ 1. *The Conditions of the Conflict.*

THE eight years' war which opened with the skirmish of Lexington forms one of the saddest episodes in the history of the British Commonwealth. It was a very cruel civil war, not only because Britons and Americans came from the same stock and cherished the same ideals, but because both Britons and Americans were painfully divided among themselves. In Britain, indeed, a majority had no doubts about the justice of the British cause; but the minority included some of the noblest living Englishmen, such as Chatham, Burke, and Charles Fox, who regarded the revolting colonists not as enemies, but as fellow-citizens upholding a cause dear to themselves. In America, on the other hand, there were thousands of loyalists in every colony, even in New England; and among these were included many who had strongly opposed the Stamp Act and the tea duty, but who shrank from the prospect of breaking up the unity of the empire.

It is impossible to estimate the number of the loyalists. John Adams, who had no motive for exaggeration, put them at one-third of the total population of the colonies; the loyalists themselves claimed to be in a majority, and they included many of the best elements in the population. What is certain is that they supplied more than 20,000 recruits to the British forces, and that when the war was ended more than 60,000 deserted their homes and the careers they had made for themselves, and started life afresh in the unpeopled wastes of Canada and elsewhere, in order that they might remain citizens of the British Commonwealth. The loyalists were most numerous in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the Carolinas, and Georgia; while the most vigorous leadership of the inde-

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pendence party came from democratic New England and from aristocratic Virginia.

The fact that the war was a civil war, marked by all the heart-breaking hesitations and divisions which civil war involves, explains many aspects of it which would otherwise be unintelligible. It explains in part the half-heartedness and vacillation with which the struggle was conducted on the British side, by generals who hated the work they had to do, and were tempted to twine the olive branch round the cutting edge of their swords. It explains the inadequate support of which Washington bitterly complained, and the constant difficulty of recruiting and provisioning the American armies. It explains the cruelty shown to loyalists and to the British forces which surrendered at Saratoga : these things were due to the fears and misgivings of the American leaders, who had made up their own minds, but knew that they were not followed by a united people. A long comradeship of nearly two centuries, recently sealed by the efforts and triumphs of a great war, could not be broken up without terrible suffering and grave doubts on both sides.

The fact that so many of the colonists were either half-hearted or favoured the British cause ought of itself almost to have ensured the success of British arms, and would have done so if this advantage had been skilfully used. Indeed, at the outset all the advantages seemed to be on the British side, and there was a general expectation that victory would be quickly and easily secured. The colonies were mutually jealous, and had not learnt to act together. Their Congress, hastily improvised, had no effective control over the country as a whole, and no efficient administrative system ; its members spent their time in arguing and quarrelling, and gave no steady support to their commanders in the field. Communications between the long straggling line of colonies were extremely bad ; they had in the past been mainly conducted by sea, and the British fleet held the seas. These conditions were never fully utilised by the British leaders ; but they placed great difficulties in the way of their opponents.

Two things alone gave any hope of success to the colonial cause. The first was the fighting quality of the colonial troops. Though the men were undisciplined, and prone to leave the standards on the least provocation, they showed themselves to be splendid fighting men, staunch, cool, and courageous ; and though they were at a disadvantage in

regular operations, they were very skilful in irregular warfare. But the second and the greatest factor of success was the personality of the great leader, George Washington,¹ who was appointed to the chief command at the opening of the struggle, and held it to the end in face of infinite difficulty and misrepresentation. He was not a man of brilliant inspirations or dazzling adventures; perhaps he was not even a general of the first rank. But he was a Man; *vir tenax propositi*; resolute in action, patient in adversity, sound in judgment, endowed with a masculine intelligence which could grasp the real essentials of a situation and could look at even the most unpleasant facts squarely and honestly, without blinking what he did not like, utterly trustworthy, completely devoted to the cause he had adopted, undismayed when things were darkest. To him alone it was due that against all the odds, and in face of infinite difficulties, the American cause tided over the interval until the power of France was ready to come to its aid.

On the British side there was no man of this quality, or of anything like this quality. There was no Pitt or Hastings at the direction of affairs: the real control of policy was wielded by the King, and though he was brave, tenacious, and industrious, George III. had no touch of genius. There was no Wolfe or Clive to lead the armies in the field: it was only on the seas, and against the old enemies, France and Spain, that Britain produced, during this war, men worthy to rank with the heroes of the last great struggle. The plans of campaign were always ill thought out, and the rosier chances of success were thrown away time after time. But it is fair to add that the resources available for the conflict were extremely inadequate, especially at first. The total number of troops which Britain had under arms when the war began was 38,000, and this included the garrisons of Minorca and Gibraltar, and all the reserves which it was necessary to maintain in England and Ireland. For that reason George III. had to hire troops from some of the petty German princes. He has been bitterly attacked for this. At least it is significant that what made it necessary was the smallness of the force maintained for all the needs of a great empire; for this showed that Britain was far from being a military power, and had not looked to brute force for the maintenance of her authority. None of the great Powers of Europe maintained so small an army.

¹ There is a good short life of Washington by H. C. Lodge.

§ 2. The First Campaign and the Declaration of Independence.

When the war began, the available British forces in North America consisted of 3000 troops holding Boston, under General Gage, and a few hundreds in the alien and recently conquered province of French Canada, under the Governor, Sir Guy Carleton. Gage in Boston¹ was beset by some 20,000 militiamen from Massachusetts and the neighbouring colonies: and in June Washington was appointed by Congress to take command of this loosely organised and undisciplined force. Even when his numbers were brought up to 10,000 by reinforcements from England, Gage did not venture to take the offensive. The colonists, growing bold, seized the height of Bunkers Hill (June 1775) which overlooked the town; and Gage had to drive them out by a costly frontal attack, to prevent his position from being made untenable. There was no advantage in clinging to Boston unless it was to be made a base for the subjugation of Massachusetts; failing that, it would have been better to evacuate the town. Yet neither Gage nor his successor Howe made any attempt to take the aggressive. They did not even occupy the heights which surrounded and commanded the harbour and the town; and when, in March 1776, Washington occupied the commanding position of the Dorchester Heights, there was nothing to be done but to withdraw the troops by sea to Halifax. An earlier withdrawal would have been a safe and strategic move: now, withdrawal was defeat.

Meanwhile, during the winter of 1775-1776, a small colonial army made a bold attack on Canada. For a moment they occupied Montreal and laid siege to Quebec. But the French Canadians remained loyal; and when substantial reinforcements arrived under General Burgoyne in the spring of 1776, the invaders were easily disposed of. Canada was safe, and could be used for a future attack on the New England colonies. Yet the boldness of the attack on Canada had raised the spirits and the prestige of the colonists. Finally, after the evacuation of Boston, an attempt was made to win success for the British cause in the South, and to help the loyalists, who had taken the field in South Carolina. But an attack from the sea upon Charleston, the chief port of the South, was a complete failure. Thus,

¹ See the map of Boston Harbour, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 55 (b), 6th Edition Plate 63 (b).

up to the summer of 1776, almost everything seemed to be going well for the rebels.

These successes encouraged the thorough-going party of independence, which had hitherto gone cautiously. Successful as they had hitherto been, the leaders of Congress were too shrewd not to know that they needed foreign aid, and they were already in negotiation with France. But negotiations would be much easier if they had the standing of an independent and recognised Government. On July 4, 1776, they issued a Declaration of Independence, in which they renounced their allegiance to the British Crown, and proclaimed to the world the separate existence of the United States of America as a sovereign Power.

The Declaration of Independence was one of the most momentous documents in the history of the world. It not only broke into fragments the British Commonwealth as it had hitherto existed; it not only launched upon history a very great new State of unlimited potentialities; it began a new era in human history, the era of democratic revolution. For in the forefront of the Declaration stood a pronouncement couched in the very language of the French philosophers whose writings were even now preparing the great upheaval of 1789 in the Old World. The new State began its history with a declaration that all men are born equal and have an inalienable right to liberty. This was, indeed, only a general statement, with no practical effects. It did not make any difference to the rights or to the laws of the American people, which remained in all essentials the rights and the laws which they had derived from Britain; nor did those among the signatories of this pronouncement who were slave-owners, as many of them were, even think of applying their principles by giving to their slaves the 'inalienable right' of liberty; neither the Declaration nor any subsequent act required them to do so.¹ But it was a new thing

¹ It is a curious fact that four years earlier Lord Mansfield, as Chief Justice of the King's Bench, had decided, in the famous *Somerset* case, that the laws of England did not permit of the existence of slavery, though these laws did not include any such sweeping statement as appeared in the Declaration of Independence. *Somerset* was a negro slave who had been brought to England, and in whose behalf a writ of *Habeas Corpus* was obtained. A passage of Lord Mansfield's judgment is worth quoting: 'The state of slavery is of such a nature, that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, moral or political, but only by positive law. . . . It is so odious that nothing can be suffered to support it, but positive law. Whatever inconvenience, therefore, may follow from this decision, I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the law of England; and therefore the black must be discharged.' Thenceforth any slave who set foot on English soil was free; not so in America, where, for nearly a century

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in human history that a great State should thus choose as the motto of the first chapter in its history a proclamation of universal human rights as the ideal to be aimed at.

This preamble was followed by eighteen articles of charge against Britain and her King, to justify the renunciation of allegiance. Not one of them would to-day be accepted, without large qualifications, as a statement of historical fact; they were drawn up in the spirit of the advocate, not of the judge. But even so, it was a new and great thing in the world's history that a group of communities should claim, as a matter of right, the power to sever ancient ties and cast off their allegiance solely on the grounds of alleged breaches of right and justice. We may feel that in the heat of a great crisis the indictment was unfairly laid, and yet also feel that it was a fine thing that it should have been laid at all; just as, in another sphere, we may believe that Warren Hastings was wrongly impeached, and yet hold that it was a fine thing that he should be impeached.

§ 3. *The Campaigns of 1776 and 1777 and the Capitulation of Saratoga.*

The ink was scarcely dry upon the Declaration of Independence when things began to look black for the Americans—henceforth no longer to be described as 'colonists.' General Howe collected his forces at Halifax, and descended upon New York (August 1776). He caught a large part of Washington's army in Long Island, out-maneuvred it, and was only prevented from forcing its surrender by his own slowness and the intervention of a fog. He occupied New York, and was received by its population with every sign of rejoicing. He now held the lower end of the great Hudson waterway,¹ which linked up New York with Lake Champlain and Canada, now in the control of Burgoyne's army. Washington was compelled to fall back into New Jersey; and it seemed within the power of the British forces to isolate New England and to cut it off wholly from the main American army and the seat of Congress at Philadelphia.

The outlook was black for the Americans as winter drew on, especially when the British troops were welcomed in New Jersey as they had been in New York, and found no difficulty in obtaining ample supplies. Washington relieved

to come, 'positive law' overrode the sweeping assertions of the Declaration, and fugitive slaves had to cross the frontier of Canada in order to find freedom under the British flag.

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 56 (a), 6th Edition Plate 66 (a).

the situation a little by a brilliant surprise attack on a detached force of Hessians at Trenton, which enabled him to regain for the moment a good part of New Jersey. But his prospects for the coming campaign were gloomy indeed. On any calculation of military chances, the campaign of 1777 ought to have broken the backbone of the American resistance. That it did not do so was due to two things: the mistakes of the British command, and the heroic staunchness of Washington.

The main object of the campaign of 1777, as it was laid down by the War Office at home, was to secure control of the line of the Hudson, and thus completely isolate New England, the heart of the resistance. For this purpose an army of nearly 8000 men, under Burgoyne, was to advance from Lake Champlain to Albany;¹ while another army from New York was to secure the line of the Hudson. But it was essential that this co-operative campaign should be carefully planned, and carried out by adequate forces from both ends of the line. The Commander-in-Chief, General Howe, had accepted this plan. But he seems to have underestimated the forces that would be required to ensure success, and he was himself anxious to strike a vigorous blow at the main American force under Washington, and to get full control of the Middle States. There was a great deal to be said in favour of such a course: to strike hard at the main enemy force is one of the first principles of strategy, and effective control of the Middle States would in fact have isolated New England just as certainly as control of the Hudson Valley. But it would be fatal to waver between two plans.

Howe believed that he could dispose of Washington, capture Philadelphia, and secure the mastery of the Middle States, in time to give full support to the Hudson campaign. Carrying his army round by sea to the Delaware River,² and thus threatening to cut off Washington from Virginia, Howe defeated the main American army at Brandywine (October 1777) and occupied Philadelphia; Congress had already taken flight, and the advent of the British forces was welcomed by the numerous loyalists of Pennsylvania. Washington tried to redeem the situation by attacking at Germantown, just outside Philadelphia; but he was again defeated, and had to withdraw his troops into winter quarters at Valley Forge. Here his army suffered the extreme of

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 56 (a), 6th Edition Plate 66 (a).

² See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 55, 6th Edition Plate 63.

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misery and disheartenment throughout a terrible winter. If Howe had struck at it swiftly and hard, he must have destroyed it ; he failed to do so, misled by the gallant front which his opponent did his best to maintain.

But it was October before Philadelphia was won ; it ought to have been won in June if the programme was to be successfully carried out. And in order to win his victories, Howe had found it necessary to draw upon even the inadequate forces which he had left under the command of Clinton in New York ; so that Clinton was quite unable to get control of the Hudson line, or to be ready to meet and support the northern army advancing towards Albany. Burgoyne had started from Canada in June. He had secured the forts on Lake Champlain and Lake George. But he had then to advance through a thickly wooded country, admirably suited for delaying tactics ; he had great difficulties with his supplies ; he had to deal with all the levies of New England, at their best in the irregular fighting of the backwoods. He lost the support of his Indian allies, partly by forbidding them to use their atrocious modes of warfare. Finally, in October, just when Howe was winning success in the South, he found himself hemmed in at Saratoga. unable either to advance or to retreat, and was compelled to surrender with his whole force.

This was the turning point of the war. In itself the capitulation of Saratoga was by no means a decisive defeat. The advantage still lay heavily on the British side, and (apart from foreign intervention) another campaign, vigorously conducted, might still have broken the back of the resistance. The real importance of Saratoga was that it decided the French Government to join in the war. The news reached France on December 2. Within a fortnight the French Government had informed the American agents in Paris that they were prepared to make an alliance ; a formal treaty was completed on February 6, 1778, and on March 13 France declared war against Britain. Behind France stood Spain, joined to her by the Family Compact, and already resolved to come in at the right moment, when her preparations were complete. The two Powers, and more especially France, had long given secret help to the Americans. They had advanced money ; they had supplied munitions of war ; they had allowed American privateers to use their harbours as their bases in the war against British trade. They had both been preparing for revenge ever since the Peace of Paris, in particular building up their

fleets so that they should be able to cope with the British navy. Now the moment seemed to have come to assure the downfall of Britain.

There is something of high comedy in the spectacle of two absolute monarchies, two colonial Powers which had never allowed the slightest semblance of self-governing rights to their own colonies, coming forward to protect the British colonies against the tyranny of the mother-country which had granted them, as a matter of course, self-governing rights wider than any other country in the world enjoyed. But it was not the freedom of the colonies which France or Spain desired; it was the downfall and ruin of Britain. And therefore from the moment of the French declaration of war, the struggle changed its character. It became no longer a civil strife among the divided peoples of a group of free communities; it became, for Britain, a struggle of life and death against ancient enemies, now for the first time effectively combined: a struggle in which no aid was to be looked for in any quarter; a struggle, therefore, which called, and did not call in vain, for the dogged and obstinate courage which refuses to admit defeat or to be disheartened by failure.

§ 4. *The Changed Conditions of the War after 1777.*

In face of these new and grave perils, Lord North would fain have resigned the conduct of affairs to a national ministry, of which the great Chatham would have been the obvious head. But Chatham was resolved not to separate from the Whigs, with whom he had been acting in opposition; and the King was determined not to readmit the Whigs to power, or to sacrifice his hard-earned victory. Yet Chatham and the Whigs differed profoundly; for the Whigs had made up their minds that America was definitely lost, and were for at once recognising the independence of the colonies; while Chatham, though willing to make almost any concession, could not endure the thought of submitting to the permanent disruption of the Empire. In this he was at one with the King, and with the feeling of the nation as a whole, and it is probable that if he had not been a wreck of his former self, and had had a few more years to live, he would sooner or later have returned to his old post. In that event his resolute and inspiring vigour might have wrought as great a change as it had done in 1757, when the outlook seemed quite as black; though it is doubtful

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whether even Chatham could have brought about a reconciliation with America after all that had happened. But his days were numbered. In April of this very year, 1778, he made his last dramatic speech in the House of Lords : a faltering appeal, spoken in physical agony, against the policy of his Whig allies, and a protest against ' the dismemberment of this ancient and most glorious monarchy.' The hand of death interrupted him. He was helped from the House only to die a few weeks later ; and in the moment of its greatest crisis the British Commonwealth lost the one man who might perhaps even yet have saved it.

The conduct of the war, therefore, still remained in the King's hands and in those of his now discredited and divided ministers. But if George III. lacked Chatham's fire and vision and boldness of conception, he was at least a brave man ; he did not quail before disaster. And in this he represented the spirit of the nation far better than his Whig critics. For the nation rose superbly to meet the crisis. As in the days of 1758 and 1759, though without Pitt's clarion voice to inspire it, it faced the emergency undismayed ; it bore the burden of taxation, the ruin of its over-sea trade, the spectacle of a growing concourse of enemies such as would have terrified the men of an earlier generation ; once more its chief towns raised régiments at their own expense, and volunteers began to drill.

Fortunately the struggle had to be fought mainly on the seas. But the navy had been gravely neglected of recent years. Of the 120 battleships which it comprised, scarcely half were ready to put to sea at the opening of the struggle, against the 80 of France, which were soon to be joined by the 60 of Spain. What was yet more serious, the policy of the Admiralty, under the direction of Lord Sandwich, was faulty and ill-conceived. Forgetting the lessons of the Seven Years' War, Sandwich allowed the fleets of the enemy to leave their harbours freely, instead of blockading them, or fighting them just outside, as Pitt had done ; and this compelled him to break up the British fleet into scattered detachments, each fighting its own campaign, in home waters, in the West Indies, on the American coast, and in the Indian Ocean. Some of the best naval commanders threw up their commissions in disgust. Yet even over these disabilities the spirit of the navy rose triumphant. Some of its greatest achievements belong to these dark days ; and before the war ended it had almost re-established all its old ascendancy, against odds such as it had never had to

face before. And it was superbly supported by the mercantile marine, which now had to run the gauntlet of American, French, Spanish and later Dutch warships and privateers, and found every sea unsafe, and could not use most of the harbours to which it had been accustomed to resort. Every merchantman became a fighting vessel; and if many hundreds of ships fell captive to the omnipresent enemies, the captures made from these enemies by British privateers were even more numerous. All the seas of the world became the scene of innumerable fights of which no adequate record survives.

§ 5. *The Campaigns of 1778 and 1779.*

The first effect of the entry of France into the war was that in America the British forces evacuated Philadelphia and fell back upon New York, thus abandoning all that had been gained in the previous year, and giving up the hope of isolating New England. Until almost the end of the year 1778 there was, in fact, no serious fighting upon the American continent. The reason for this was that a French expedition, either to America or to the West Indies, was anticipated, and it was thought wise to concentrate forces.

The whole interest of the year turned upon the question whether France would succeed in making use of the temporary naval superiority which the negligence of Sandwich had allowed her. An indecisive naval fight off Ushant sufficed to send the main Atlantic fleet of the French back into Brest. But the Mediterranean fleet got out safely under Count d'Estaing, and appeared on the coast of America with forces far superior to the British squadron in these waters. Yet Lord Howe, who commanded the outnumbered British fleet, so completely out-manceuvred the French that d'Estaing sailed away without achieving anything, leaving his American allies disappointed and indignant. He betook himself to the West Indies, where France hoped to make substantial conquests. Here again he had a great superiority of numbers; but the British admirals Barrington and Byron fenced with him as skilfully as Howe had done in the North; and although the French were able to capture the two small islands of Dominica and Grenada they were not able to prevent the British from occupying the more valuable island of St. Lucia, with its splendid harbour, which became the principal British naval base in these waters throughout the war.

Thus far, against heavy odds, the British navy had held its own ; and the encouragement which this gave was so great that at the end of the year a new forward movement was begun in America. A small force, sent round by sea from New York to Georgia, seized Savannah, and made a promising beginning in the conquest of the Southern colonies, which henceforth became the principal object of the war in America. It seemed as though Britain would be able to hold her own against France and the revolting colonies in combination.

But 1779 made the struggle more intense by bringing in a new enemy. Spain declared war ; and though her principal aim was the conquest of Gibraltar and Minorca, her entry into the struggle increased the dangers by which British merchant ships were surrounded, while the addition of her fleet to that of France gave a definite preponderance to the enemy forces on the seas. How dangerous this might be was shown when in August the Spanish fleet, evading an English squadron sent to intercept it, made a junction with the French Atlantic fleet, and appeared in overwhelming strength in the Channel. An invasion of either England or Ireland seemed to be imminent ; there were few regular forces available for defence ; and in both countries volunteer forces were hastily enrolled for defence. Yet the danger passed off ; the enemy fleets, after flaunting it for a time in the Channel, disappeared with no harm done.

Meanwhile great Spanish forces had beleaguered Gibraltar by land and sea ; and the most famous of all the sieges to which the rock-fortress has had to submit began. It was to last for three years, and was to afford the opportunity for one of the most glorious feats of British arms. Away in the East, also, the two most formidable military Powers in India, the Mahrattas and Hyder Ali of Mysore, were simultaneously attacking the British power ; and Warren Hastings, knowing that no help was to be looked for from the hard-pressed motherland, had been drawn into a desperate struggle for mere existence, the most terrible test to which the British power in the East had yet been put.

Yet even in these grave circumstances the balance of success still lay on the side of Britain throughout 1779. Gibraltar, under the gallant Elliott, held out heroically, though by the end of the year food and ammunition were both running low. A French attack on Jersey was splendidly beaten off by the militia of the island with the aid of one regiment of regulars. On the West Coast of Africa, if the

French seized the British factories at Senegal, the British responded by capturing the island of Goree. And British sea-going commerce still went gallantly on, thanks to the courage of its sailors and the skill of the navy, while the trade of France with the West Indies was almost wholly ruined.

Above all, in America British prospects were brighter than they had been since 1777. British squadrons scoured the coast of New England, and scotched many privateers in their nests; practically the whole naval force of Massachusetts was destroyed, though the gallant American sailor, Paul Jones, was meanwhile carrying on his ravages in British waters. Once more, as in 1778, a French fleet appeared off the American coast. It was persuaded to join with an American army in an attempt to reconquer Savannah. But the attack, by 10,000 men, was beaten off with heavy loss by the garrison of 2500; and the French returned home again, leaving their American allies more dissatisfied than ever, and the British position more solid in the South. Britain was holding her own against France, Spain and the revolting colonies in combination.

§ 6 *Britannia contra Mundum the Laws of War at Sea.*

The next year, 1780, brought a grave addition to the dangers by which Britain found herself surrounded. In her fight for existence she depended primarily upon her fleet, and upon its capacity to damage the trade of her enemies and to intercept their supplies of the materials of war. For this purpose she had stopped and searched neutral vessels to see that they were not carrying goods for any of her enemies; and she had insisted upon regarding naval stores (among other things) as contraband of war, justifying the seizure of any ship carrying them to an enemy port. In doing so she had not gone beyond the accepted usages of war, which in these matters were as yet ill-defined by international law. But undoubtedly her action had inflicted great inconvenience upon neutral traders, and aroused even louder complaints than during the Seven Years' War.

In March 1780 Catherine II. of Russia, egged on by Frederick the Great, who had never forgiven Britain for deserting him in 1763, announced that while remaining neutral she would enforce by her fleets four propositions:—(1) that neutral ships must be allowed to sail freely from port to port of a belligerent country; (2) that all goods (other

than contraband of war) carried by neutral ships, even if they belonged to a belligerent, must be free from seizure ; (3) that contraband must be regarded as covering only the actual munitions of war, so that the export of naval stores to France could not be interrupted ; and (4) that no blockade could be recognised which was not effective. France, Spain and America at once accepted these propositions, which were of course highly advantageous to themselves. Britain refused, holding that to accept them would be to deprive herself of her most efficient weapon. Thereupon Catherine formed a League of Armed Neutrality including (besides Russia) Denmark, Sweden, Prussia and the Emperor. Thus practically the whole of Europe was arrayed against Britain ; and the utmost caution had to be shown in dealing with neutral ships.

Of all the neutral powers the one which had made the most profit out of the war was Britain's ancient ally, Holland. She had supplied the Americans with vast quantities of naval and military stores ; she had allowed American privateers to refit and to sell their prizes in her harbours ; she had turned her West Indian island of St. Eustatius into a great smuggling base for the supply of the Americans, and this barren rock had become the richest bit of land in the world ; she was driving a heavy traffic with France and Spain, keeping them in naval supplies. Many of her ships had been stopped and seized—some quite legitimately on every view, since they were carrying contraband ; others merely because they were trading with Britain's enemies. In October 1780 the draft of a treaty between Holland and the Americans, which had been drawn up in 1778, was captured on an American prize. The British Government made this the occasion for a declaration of war (October 1780) ; and Holland was added to the already terrible list of Britain's foes. At the least her ships carrying supplies to France and to America could now be legitimately intercepted.

The use which Britain had made of her strength at sea had thus dangerously added to her difficulties. Yet it cannot be said that she had definitely violated any rule of international law hitherto accepted. But the laws of war at sea were vague ; and undoubtedly they had been strained. On the other hand, the demands of the Armed Neutrality would have stripped naval power of half its weapons ; and in a crisis of the nation's destiny it was natural that old and accustomed weapons should be fully employed. The

question remained undetermined. Britain never accepted the rigid doctrines of the Armed Neutrality: if she had done so she could not, later, have held her own against Napoleon. But she moderated her practice; and though Holland was added to the list of her enemies, the Northern Powers maintained an uneasy peace.

While these discussions were proceeding, the campaigns of 1780 had brought, on the whole, encouraging successes to the hard-pressed British people. In America, following up the earlier successes in the Southern States, Clinton had captured Charleston, the capital of South Carolina and the chief trading centre of the South, after a three-months' siege; and his prisoners included 5000 soldiers and 1000 sailors with 400 guns. Having achieved this striking success, Clinton left to his lieutenant, Cornwallis—perhaps the ablest British leader in the war—the task of establishing British control over the Carolinas. At first he was highly successful, thanks to the aid of the numerous loyalists of this region. At the battle of Camden he inflicted a crushing blow upon the main American army of the South, and North Carolina lay open before him. His success was qualified by the defeat of a force of loyalists at King's Mountain, which endangered his communications, and forced him to withdraw into South Carolina. But upon the whole the campaign brought a welcome success to the British arms, and a still more welcome promise of future victories.

Even better news came from the fleets. Rodney,¹ perhaps the greatest British sailor of this time, had been sent at the beginning of the year with a convoy of supply-ships for the relief of Gibraltar. He had fallen in with a Spanish convoy taking supplies to the besiegers, and had captured the battleship that guarded it, and carried off the convoy for the help of the besieged. He had met and crushed a Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent, capturing six of its best ships. He had thrown abundant supplies into Gibraltar. Then, sailing straight for the West Indies, he had met the French fleet off Dominica, and had only failed to cripple it because some of his captains misunderstood his daring and original plan of attack, which marked a new departure in naval tactics. The French admiral, even though joined by a Spanish contingent which gave him a great superiority of numbers, gave up the conflict and sailed home. Britain was left, for the time, with full command of the American

¹ There is a short life of Rodney, by David Hannay, in the 'English Men of Action' Series

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waters. And meanwhile Gibraltar was still holding out with splendid gallantry, repelling every attack. Against her ring of foes, and despite the incompetent direction of her affairs at headquarters, Britain was holding her own.

§ 7 *The Decisive Campaign the Capitulation of Yorktown*

At no point during the war had the Americans been more depressed than at the close of the campaign of 1780, they were almost bankrupt, many of their troops were mutinous, one of their best generals, Arnold, had deserted to the British side, and they seemed to be losing all the South. The French also were disheartened, and in sore straits for money. Hitherto they had taken scarcely any part in the fighting on the American continent, for they had not joined in the war to help the Americans, but for their own ends. But this had made the Americans distrustful of them, and they had therefore, in the autumn of 1780, sent a small army of 6000 men across the Atlantic, to join the handful of French volunteers who had been serving with the American forces. But this force (which ought never to have been allowed to cross the Atlantic in safety) had as yet achieved nothing, nor had any profitable results arisen from the fighting in the West Indies. The Spaniards were not less dissatisfied. They could make no impression on Gibraltar, and had hinted that if only Britain would cede to them that rock, they would willingly withdraw from the war. The proposal was scouted. Thus at the end of 1780, after five years of war, the position of affairs seemed highly promising from the British point of view. Had the resources of British power been wisely handled, victory seemed still possible.

Yet the next and critical year of the war was to see the downfall of these hopes, and the chief cause of this disappointment was to be found in the folly with which the navy was handled by the home Government. One French fleet after another had already been allowed to escape from its ports instead of being intercepted in European waters, and no disastrous results had followed, though the last of these fleets had brought a French army to American soil. But the same blunder could not with impunity be too often repeated. Its next repetition was to be fatal, and the navy, which had fought so gallantly against so many difficulties, was to have the humiliation of finding that its failure at a crucial moment, through no fault of its own, but solely

through the folly of Lord Sandwich, was to bring ruin to its country's cause.

Yet in many aspects the campaign of 1781 was scarcely less successful than its predecessors. Gibraltar—relieved for a second time early in the year—held out splendidly throughout the year, though the Spanish attacks were more prolonged and desperate than ever. Jersey, once more attacked by the French, defended itself yet more gallantly than before. In the East, Warren Hastings was achieving miracles. A combined French and Spanish fleet, indeed, once more swept the English Channel for a time; but it did no serious damage, and dared not even attack an inferior British squadron shut up in Torbay. Off the Dogger Bank, in the waters of the North Sea, Hyde Parker fought a dogged battle with the Dutch, as fierce as the old battles of the seventeenth century; and though the result was undecisive, the Dutch henceforth took no active part in the war; the danger of a junction of their fleets with those of France and Spain was at an end.

But the chief interest of 1781 lay on the other side of the Atlantic, where the fighting by land and sea, now inextricably intertwined, went through strange vicissitudes, and was to lead to grave results. It opened well; for at the beginning of the year Rodney captured the Dutch island of St. Eustatius, with immense plunder. But meanwhile a powerful French fleet under de Grasse had, like its predecessors in previous years, been allowed unchallenged exit from Brest. Rodney, loth to abandon the plunder of St. Eustatius, left his second-in-command, Hood—a seaman as brilliant as himself—to resist de Grasse with a far inferior force; and though Hood did wonders, he could not do the impossible. He could not boldly challenge the French to battle. He could not prevent them sailing off to the American coast, where their arrival was to have momentous consequences.

For meanwhile the fighting in the Southern States had reached a crisis.¹ Cornwallis had boldly advanced northwards into North Carolina, hoping to press on into Virginia, and to crush the main American army, by penning it between his own forces and those of Clinton in New York. As Cornwallis moved northwards, guerilla warfare sprang up behind him in South Carolina, and the British forces in that State were hard put to it to maintain their control over the district round Charleston. Moreover, Cornwallis was

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 55, 6th Edition Plate 63.

now faced by Greene, the ablest of the American generals next to Washington; a flying column told off to guard his flank was badly defeated at Cowpens; and though Cornwallis himself defeated Greene in the hard-fought battle of Guildford Court-house, where the enemy outnumbered him by two to one, the victory was dearly bought, for his losses were so heavy as to make the continuance of the campaign difficult. He resolved upon a bold dash into Virginia, risking the danger that threatened the little force left behind in South Carolina. The venture met at first with a considerable degree of success: if Clinton had supported it vigorously from New York, or sent strong reinforcements by sea, it might have led to great results, for while Greene in the South was reconquering South Carolina, Virginia was almost defenceless, and the main American army under Washington, watching New York from across the Hudson, was in a dangerous position. But instead of supporting Cornwallis, Clinton withdrew forces from him to resist a possible attack by Washington, now reinforced by the French army; and Cornwallis was ordered to take up a defensive position by the sea, a safe base so long as British fleets maintained the upper hand. He chose the peninsula of Yorktown on Chesapeake Bay. Thereupon Washington, having kept Clinton tied up at New York in anticipation of an attack, marched rapidly southwards against Cornwallis by land, while the French fleet under de Grasse, just arrived from the West Indies, was instructed to beset him from the sea.

At this moment of crisis the British navy lost command of the American waters. Thanks to the blunders of the Admiralty at home—thanks to Rodney's delays at St. Eustatius—thanks to a whole series of mistakes and misadventures, it was a French fleet, not a British fleet, that the anxious eyes of Cornwallis saw sailing up Chesapeake Bay at the beginning of September 1781. Too late, a British fleet arrived off the entrance of the great inlet. It was outnumbered; and its commander, Graves, had not the genius that could deal successfully with a superior enemy, or the desperate valour that could run all risks in a great crisis. He fought, handled his ships badly, was knocked about, and put back tamely to New York, leaving Cornwallis without succour. On October 19 Cornwallis was forced, after a gallant resistance, to capitulate. On the same day Clinton started from New York with naval and military reinforcements for his relief. By so narrow a margin, by

such a chapter of blunders and accidents, was the final event of the American struggle determined.

§ 8. *The Last Phases of the War.*

For the capitulation of Yorktown was final and decisive. Though British forces still held out in New York and in Charleston till peace was signed, they were in effect beleaguered in both places; the *elan* of success had passed from them to their opponents; and no one any longer entertained any hope of victory or planned aggressive campaigns. When the news reached London, its fatal character was at once recognised. 'O God! it is all over—it is all over,' North exclaimed repeatedly when the message reached him. The King remained indomitable; but no one shared his resolution. The opposition in Parliament gathered strength; and by March 1782 North's long ministry had come to an end, and the distressed and reluctant King was forced to hand over the reins to the hated Whigs, and leave to them the making of the peace. The Whigs had long since committed themselves to the recognition of American independence; and though the remnants of Lord Chatham's following, under Shelburne, who had combined with the Whigs to form the new ministry, struggled to maintain their dead chief's ideal, and hoped against hope that some mode of reconciliation might even yet be possible, the crushing blow of Yorktown made all such hopes no more than vain fancies. The independence of America was secured; the unity of the Commonwealth was finally shattered; and it remained only to fix the formal terms of the dissolution. But the negotiations for peace took long; and in the meanwhile the war against France and Spain continued.

The chief scenes of fighting in this last stage of the war were the West Indies, Gibraltar, and Minorca; and the story was one of mixed success and failure, illuminated by two outstanding episodes of splendid valour and skill, which closed in glory the most unhappy war in the modern history of the Commonwealth. In the West Indies, the French fleet, fresh from Yorktown, and enjoying a superiority of three to two against the British fleet under Hood, succeeded in capturing the islands of St. Kitts and Nevis, despite Hood's brilliant and daring *manceuvres*; they were seriously threatening Jamaica when Rodney arrived with reinforcements. Meanwhile the Spaniards had taken pos-

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session of the Bahama Islands, and it seemed as if the British possessions in the West Indies were to be lost as completely as the North American colonies. But this danger was removed, and the supremacy of the British navy was triumphantly reasserted, by a great victory won by Rodney in April 1782.

The navy had not lost heart, but was eager to make good the disasters of the last year. Its personnel had never been larger, or more full of fighting spirit; its commanders were assured of their ability to defeat anything like equal numbers of the enemy; and now, at the end of the war, ships and guns and equipment of all kinds were being produced in an abundance that would have changed the course of events a year or two earlier. And the navy rejoiced to seize the opportunity of meeting the fleet of de Grasse on something like equal terms, and under Rodney's skilful leadership, and of exacting a tardy revenge for Yorktown. The battle of the Saints (so called from a group of little islands between Dominica and Martinique) was one of the most memorable in the history of the British navy, because in it Rodney abandoned the traditional method of fighting in long lines, ship to ship, and (perhaps by accident) reintroduced the old method which had been employed in the Dutch wars, of breaking the enemy's line, and concentrating the whole attack upon the severed segment of it. The French line was broken into three parts; and the central section was annihilated, de Grasse himself surrendering with his flagship. This battle saved Jamaica, fully re-established the ascendancy of the British navy, and compelled France to concede better terms than she would otherwise have yielded, in order to end a war from which she could hope for no further success.

Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean, Minorca had been compelled to surrender to a combined French and Spanish army, after a siege gallantly maintained for six months; the garrison being reduced to 600 men fit to bear arms. But Gibraltar still heroically maintained its defence during the third year of the siege. In September 1782 it had to withstand a final desperate onslaught by the combined naval and military forces of France and Spain, eager to reduce it before peace was signed. The garrison numbered not more than 7000 men. It was faced by a land army of 40,000, and by a combined fleet of 49 ships of the line. There were also ten great floating-batteries moored off the Rock, which were believed to be unsinkable and safe from fire. Amid a

terrific bombardment from land and sea, which lasted for days, the defenders concentrated their attack upon the floating-batteries. Attacked by red-hot shot from the fortress, and simultaneously by a raking fire from a group of small British gunboats which boldly ventured out from the harbour, all the floating-batteries blew up or were burnt. Of their crews only 400 were saved ; and these were rescued by British sailors who dared the hail of shot to pick them up in open boats. This final and desperate attack having failed, the besiegers fell back once more upon a blockade. But the blockade was broken, with great courage and skill, by a fleet under Lord Howe, which threw a fresh supply of stores into the beleaguered fortress ; and when the news that peace had been concluded arrived on February 6, 1783, the flag was still flying. Thus the war against a world in arms ended gloriously ; if it had brought disaster, it brought no shame.

§ 9. *The Peace Settlement and its Consequences.*

During the long negotiations for peace, which had lasted through the greater part of 1782, one of the main points at issue was the question whether the recognition of American independence should be part of the treaty with France, or should be separately negotiated. The Government of France apparently desired not only to make independence appear a gift to America from herself, but also to limit the new State within the Alleghany Mountains, reclaiming for herself, or for her ally Spain, the rich valley of the Mississippi. But the British negotiators, having made up their minds to the recognition of independence, preferred to do the thing frankly and directly ; and in November 1782 a treaty was signed whereby the independence of the United States of America was formally recognised by the motherland from which they had sprung. The westward boundary of the new State was defined as the line of the Mississippi River ; it was thus to include all that Britain had acquired from France in 1763, save only Canada, which remained, and remained by its own choice, a member of the truncated British Commonwealth.

The treaties with France, Spain and Holland were longer delayed, and were not finally agreed upon till early in 1783. Thanks to the brilliant military exploits of the last year, which showed that Britain's power of resistance was by no means exhausted, they almost represented a return

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to the *status quo ante bellum*. France gained the West Indian island of St. Lucia, and the West African district of Senegal, which had been British since 1763; otherwise she made no gains from the long war upon which she had spent her substance. Spain acquired the island of Minorca, after eighty years of British occupation; but she had to forgo her hopes of Gibraltar. In the New World she regained Florida, which she had lost in 1763, and thus became the nearest neighbour of the United States. Otherwise she also had won no advantage from her exertions and her sacrifices.

In the eyes of many men of that generation, the treaties of 1782 and 1783 marked the close of the period of British greatness. They might rather have concluded that the nation which could show, even under incompetent leadership, such gallant resistance to so great a combination was far indeed from being a ruined Power. In truth Britain and the communities which still remained under her flag were about to enter upon a period of great prosperity and of very fruitful development; and, as we shall see, a second British Empire came into being within the generation following the loss of the first.

As for France, what had she gained from her intervention in the war? She had not ruined her ancient rival. But she had very nearly ruined herself. The strain on her finances, already gravely disorganised before the war, brought her to the verge of bankruptcy, and so formed the immediate cause of the great revolution which broke out less than seven years after the conclusion of peace. Moreover her people, upon whose minds the dreams and visions of Rousseau and the large and captivating hopes of democracy were already working, had been brought by the war into sympathy and comradeship with the democratic societies of the New World; and the conditions which they found existing in that happy land seemed to demonstrate the practicability of Rousseau's dreams, and to prove that democracy brought well-being. Thus the American struggle not only contributed to open a new era in the development of the British Commonwealth, it gave an immense impetus to that world-shaking upheaval which was soon to begin in France.

§ 10. *The Organisation of the United States.*

Having won independence, the United States of America had still to work out for themselves a system of government.

The individual States had all, during the war, adopted 'constitutions,' to replace the 'charters' under which their government had hitherto been conducted. But the constitutions did not in any case embody any material change of system, apart from the fact that the Governor and his Council, previously nominated, were henceforth to be elected. In the main the British system continued, and British common law was the basis of the legal system in all the States.

To revise the constitutions of the individual States was an easy matter; to create an efficient federal system for the United States was far more difficult. In undertaking this task the Americans found themselves faced by all the difficulties arising from the mutual jealousies of the various States, which had stood in the way of effective co-operation during the colonial period, and which had ultimately forced the British Government and Parliament to impose the taxes that the colonists themselves would not vote. On this difficulty, which had been the real cause of the revolution, the infant federation almost broke down, and six years of active discussion passed before a solution was attained. Perhaps it would not have been attained even then had it not been that the absence of any single commercial policy, such as the authority of the British Parliament had hitherto imposed, led to great confusion and to great injustice between State and State, the chief trading States taking advantage of their position to levy dues on the trade of their neighbours as it passed through their ports. Some substitute had to be found for the common organisation of defence and the common regulation of trade which the mother-country had hitherto provided, and which had been the principal cause of resentment against her.

The Congress of 1774 and its successors had been content to make 'requisitions' upon the individual States, and to trust to their public spirit to fulfil them: that was the method which, it had always been argued, ought to have been followed by Britain. But it turned out to be as unsatisfactory as the mother-country had always found it; it was the principal cause of the ineffectiveness with which the armies of the revolution were supported; and during the six years which followed the peace it manifestly and utterly broke down. The need for an effective 'national' organisation for common government was the theme of long discussions, in which the principal part was played by that

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great statesman, Alexander Hamilton ;¹ but the lesser States continued to feel acute jealousy of the establishment of any effective controlling power, against which some contended almost as bitterly as they had resisted the claims of the British Parliament. In the end, under the mere pressure of necessity (for there was now no mother-country to shoulder the common burden) a Convention was summoned in 1787 to draft a new constitution ; and the result of its work was adopted by all the individual States between 1788 and 1790.

This constitution necessarily bore the marks of the circumstances under which it was drawn up. It was of the nature of a treaty between thirteen independent States, and could therefore only be altered by the common agreement of a majority among them ; it is consequently the most rigid constitution, and the most difficult to alter, that has ever existed in any great human society. In effect it gave to the common government only certain defined powers, reserving all others for the State governments. But the wisdom and foresight of its authors have been shown by the fact that it has, for a century and a half, served the needs of a very progressive and rapidly growing community. In its main features, it was modelled, like the constitutions of the individual States, upon the system of Britain—the only system then existing in the world which could afford a model. It set up a legislature of two Houses, and an executive headed by a President who was endowed with just the powers that George III. was supposed to possess ; but, like the State constitutions, it deprived the legislature of any power of controlling the executive, and thus rendered possible acute friction or deadlock between these powers, such as the British system learnt how to avoid. But the statesmen who drew up this great monument of political wisdom were addressing themselves for the first time in human history to the task of framing a democratic system of government for a large State ; they were shaping also a system which could unite thirteen distinct and jealous, if closely kindred States ; and their work has remained in all essentials stable and unchanged, while almost every subsequent experiment in constitution-making has had to be repeatedly recast. They could not have succeeded had they not been able to draw upon a long tradition and a long experience. But, guided by this tradition and by this

¹ There is a short life of Hamilton by F. S. Oliver.

experience, the eldest-born of the family of free nations that has sprung from Britain was enabled to show a political capacity and a political wisdom that can scarcely be too highly esteemed.

[Lecky, *History of England in the 18th Century*, Channing, *History of the United States*; Mahan, *Influence of Sea-Power on History*; Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, Fitzmaurice, *Life of Shelburne*; Hammond, *Charles Fox*; Fiske, *American Revolution*; Trevelyan, *American Revolution*; Sabine, *American Loyalists*; Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of America*; Drinkwater, *Siege of Gibraltar*; Marshall, *Life of Washington*.]

CHAPTER VI

WARREN HASTINGS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOOD GOVERNMENT IN BENGAL

(A D 1772 1785)

§ 1 *The Cleansing of the Augean Stable, 1772-1774.*

WHILE an empire was being lost in America, in India the British power was being saved from the destruction which seemed to threaten it in 1771, and was being turned into the means of bringing good government to the Indian peoples, by the genius, courage, and patience of one man. The work of Warren Hastings, carried on in the face of extraordinary difficulties of every kind, formed in truth the turning-point in the history of British India, and the foundation of all the good work which was subsequently done.

Faced by bankruptcy, the Directors of the Company had resolved that they must no longer leave in the hands of a powerless Indian the function of collecting the revenues of Bengal, which had been conferred upon them by the Mogul's grant in 1765, but must undertake this function themselves. It was to carry out this change that Hastings was sent to Bengal in 1772¹. But he saw from the first that this was not enough, and that corruption and oppression would not cease unless the Company undertook the responsibility for the whole system of government, which had fallen into complete confusion. In assuming this gigantic task, he had to carry the Directors along with him, and he had to convince the nine members of his Council, all of whom had equal voting powers with himself. Moreover, he had to do his work with such instruments as were at hand, and to use men who had for years been profiting by the very misgovernment and corruption which he asked them to help in destroying. Only a man of marvellous powers could have achieved anything at all in such conditions. Yet in two and a half years, by herculean labour, Hastings succeeded in con-

¹ Above, Chap. III. p. 35.

juring the rudiments of an orderly system out of the 'confused heap, as wild as the chaos itself,' which lay before him when he landed in Calcutta.

He swept aside Clive's ill-conceived dual system, whereby the Nawab (acting through Mohammed Reza Khan) was responsible for law and order, while the Company (also acting through Mohammed Reza Khan) was responsible for the collection of the revenues. He brought the treasury and the centre of administration to Calcutta, where everything was under the supervision of the Governor and Council. He set up a complete new system of justice, with a criminal court and a civil court in each of the thirty-six districts into which Bengal was divided, and courts of appeal at headquarters. In each district he set one of the Company's servants, with the title of Collector, to supervise these courts and to see to the collection of the revenue, and he forbade these officers to engage in trade, compensating them by other allowances. At his own expense he engaged groups of Hindu *pandits* and Mohammedan *maulvis* to draw up summaries of Hindu and Mohammedan law, for the guidance of British magistrates, for he was clear that Bengal ought to be governed according to Indian customs. He could not forbid private trade among the Company's servants altogether. But he swept away its worst iniquities by imposing an equal low rate of dues which everybody had to pay, English or Indian, including the Company itself, those who were entitled by usage to exemption being allowed to claim a refund. At once the complaints of unfair trading which had hitherto bulked so large came to an end.

Hastings also undertook a new assessment of the land revenue, and this was the most difficult of all his tasks. From time immemorial the chief item in the public revenues of India has been, as it still is, a share of the produce of lands, which is regarded as belonging to the State according to Indian usage, the State, the cultivator, and the *zemindar* (or hereditary collector of land revenues) may be regarded as being in some sense joint proprietors of the land. But it has always been difficult to assess the State's share fairly, and to make sure that the cultivator is not unjustly treated. Both the State and the cultivator had suffered under Clive's dual system, the revenue had been shrinking while the cultivator was impoverished, and it was essential that a new assessment or 'settlement' of the revenue should be carried out. These 'settlements' are familiar features of government work in modern India, they are

carried out by bodies of experts, who have plenty of time for their work, and are helped by the detailed records of previous settlements. Hastings had to carry out the first assessment without expert aid, or any adequate records, and he had to do it in a few months, for a whole province as big as a European State. It could only be done roughly. But it *was* done; and though the results were unsatisfactory, Hastings hoped that during the five years for which the 'settlement' was made new and better machinery might be developed. His principal care was that while Government received its due, the cultivator should not be oppressed; and besides devising safeguards for this end, he swept away many oppressive dues which had come into existence during the anarchy.

Thus by two years' hard work Hastings had created the outlines of an efficient and workable system of law and government in Bengal. It was not perfect, as none knew better than its author; it was only a clearing of the ground. But already it had given to Bengal a better and a juster system than any other part of India possessed; and with the zest of a great constructive statesman, Hastings looked forward to amending the system, and to training a school of administrators to work it, Indians and Englishmen side by side. He strongly held that Indians should play a principal part in the administration of an Indian province.

Meanwhile, during these same wonderful years, he had done much to clarify the relations between Bengal and the neighbouring Indian Powers. As we have seen,¹ the greatest danger by which Bengal was faced came from the aggressive and spreading power of the Mahrattas, who had recently (1771) got possession of the Mogul, and were now claiming, in his name, the payment of the tribute from Bengal which Clive had promised, and the occupation of the lands which Clive had cut off from Oudh for the Mogul's use. The Mahrattas were also seriously threatening Oudh, from two sides; and Oudh was the only ally of the Company in this part of India. Hastings showed no fear of the Mahrattas, and his firm attitude, instead of angering them, won their respect. He flatly refused to pay any more tribute. He handed back to Oudh the lands which Clive had transferred to the Mogul. And he made with the Vizier of Oudh a new and definite treaty, whereby the Vizier was entitled to retain a brigade of British troops for the defence of Oudh, so long as he paid the cost of their maintenance—an arrangement

¹ Above, Chap. iii. p. 33.

highly advantageous to both sides. He also allowed the Vizier to employ this brigade in conquering the Rohillas—a tribe of Afghan raiders who had recently mastered the country north of Oudh, and whose shifting policy seriously endangered that State.¹ The result was that Oudh was turned into a staunch ally and a bulwark for Bengal against the Mahrattas; it was also made so strong that the Mahrattas never ventured to attack it. Hastings made no conquests; he wanted none. But he dreamed of bringing peace to India by making the British power the pivot of a system of alliances with the chief Indian States, and the treaty with Oudh (1773) was the first step towards the realisation of this policy.

At the end of two years' work Bengal, which had seemed to be threatened with bankruptcy and ruin, was more secure, better organised, and more prosperous than it had been at any time since the battle of Plassey. The change was the measure of Hastings' achievement. But he hoped that his work had only begun.

§ 2. *The Regulating Act : Hastings Overridden.*

Meanwhile, in England, two committees (1772) had been disclosing the iniquities by which the Company's government had been defiled during the previous decade; and on the basis of their report an Act for regulating the Company had been introduced by Lord North and adopted by Parliament in 1773. This Act was the beginning of Government interference in Indian affairs. It did not take political power out of the hands of the Company; but it required the Directors to communicate to Government their despatches on political subjects, which was the first step towards control; and it ordained certain important changes in the system of government in the Company's Indian territories.

In the first place a Supreme Court was set up in Bengal. Its judges were to be English lawyers appointed by the Crown; they were to administer English law; they were to be entirely independent of the Company; and everybody was to have the right of resorting to them for redress against any oppression by an agent or servant of the Company. This was a well-meant safeguard against misgovernment. But nobody asked how the new court, with its English law, would fit in with the Indian system of jurisdiction; and out of this great difficulties arose.

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 61 (a), 6th Edition Plate 65 (a)

In the second place the Governor of Bengal became Governor-General, and he, with his Council, was given authority over the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay so far as concerned their relations with Indian States. This was a very real improvement, though it did not go far enough.

In the third place the Council was cut down to five members, including the Governor-General, and all were to have equal votes, so that the Governor-General might be outvoted. The members of the first Council were named in the Act. Hastings, of course, became Governor-General. But of the other four only one, Barwell, had had any Indian experience. Two of the others, Clavering and Mohson, were soldiers; the third, Philip Francis, was a very clever young man, but, as he had no influence and no political experience, his appointment is difficult to understand except on one assumption:—he was almost certainly the author of the venomous *Letters of Junius*, and it may very well have seemed desirable to send the author of these letters to the other side of the world. Certainly Francis's character was very like that of Junius. He was a brilliant writer, and a master of the arts of misrepresentation; he was a man of boundless self-assurance and devouring ambition; and he was a rancorous egoist.

The new members of Council and the new judges arrived in Calcutta in October 1774. Having read many tales of oppression, they came out convinced that the Company's servants must all be scoundrels; and Francis had persuaded himself and his two colleagues (whom he completely dominated and despised) that Hastings, since he had risen to eminence amongst these men, must be a very paragon of iniquity. In his letters home Francis made it plain that he intended to be Governor-General himself; and the first step towards this end must be the ruin of Hastings' reputation.

From the moment of their landing the new councillors set themselves to override Hastings and to undo his work; and, having a majority of three to two, they could wreak their will. Hastings and Barwell had to keep the machinery of government at work as best they could, while the majority ransacked the minutes to find grounds of attack, bombarded the Directors and the home Government with accusations against the Governor-General, and set themselves to reverse all that Hastings had done. Though they could not destroy his judicial reforms, they restored Mohammed Reza Khan

as deputy Nawab, and tried to re-establish the old dual system. When the Vizier of Oudh died (1775) they allowed the new Vizier's mother and grandmother (the Begums of Oudh) to seize the contents of the treasury on the pretext of a will which was never produced ; they cancelled Hastings' treaty, which they condemned as corrupt ; and they imposed upon the unfortunate Vizier a new treaty whereby his richest province was transferred to the Company, and burdens were imposed upon him so heavy as to reduce him to bankruptcy and impotence. They invited charges from all and sundry against the Governor-General, and eagerly accepted every accusation, however monstrous. The worst charges were brought by an unscrupulous Brahmin, Nuncomar, whom Hastings had refused to employ. While the controversy was proceeding, a charge of forgery against Nuncomar, which had been laid by an Indian before the new Council came out, was tried by the Supreme Court. Nuncomar was unanimously found guilty, after a long trial, by the four judges and a jury ; and in due course hanged, as English law ordained. Francis and his colleagues refused to intercede for Nuncomar ; they even ordered a letter which he sent to them to be burnt by the common hangman. But afterwards Francis stooped to make this episode the foundation of a monstrous charge that Hastings had suborned the Chief Justice, Impey, to commit a judicial murder. This infamous accusation is repeated in Macaulay's famous essay on Hastings ; which shows how the remorseless vendetta was pursued even beyond the grave.

For two years—two irrecoverable years when the work of reform might have made great progress—Hastings was reduced to impotence : pride and duty alone kept him at his post. Then (1776) Monson, one of the triumvirate, died ; and Hastings was able, by the use of his casting-vote, to regain his authority and to resume his work, though only under great difficulties. Francis remained in India till 1780, when he returned to England. His baffled malignity found a vent in feeding Burke and others with distorted views about Hastings. Indian affairs were so complex and so difficult to understand that this was an easy task ; and long afterwards the impeachment of Hastings was the result.

Before Francis's return another controversy had broken out. A dangerous conflict of jurisdiction had arisen (as was inevitable) between the new Supreme Court and the Indian courts ; the Supreme Court was claiming jurisdiction over zemindars and other Indians on the ground that

they were agents of the Company ; and the whole system was nearly brought to a deadlock. In this conflict Hastings and Francis were ranged on the same side ; but while Francis poured his venom on the judges, Hastings, being a statesman, not only recognised that the difficulty had arisen quite naturally, but found a remedy for it which had the happiest fruits. In 1780 he proposed that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court should also be President of the Indian appeal court, and should draw up the rules to be followed by the lower courts. Impey accepted, and did admirable work, which helped Hastings to carry out a valuable revision and improvement of the whole system. But Francis saw in this an instance of corrupt collusion ; on his representations Impey was recalled, and his work was interrupted ; and ultimately the arrangement was made an article of charge against both the Governor-General and the Chief Justice.

Such were the incredible obstacles against which Hastings had to carry on his beneficent labours. It is not surprising that he was never able to achieve the work of reconstruction which he had designed ; nor that the prestige of the British power was lowered in the eyes of the Indian States by the spectacle of these acrid disputes. Yet even amid these difficulties, from 1776 onwards, Hastings was able to do much to improve the system ; and he preserved for Bengal the repute which he had won for it, of being the most peaceful and the best governed region in India.

§ 3. *The Fight for Existence, 1779-1784.*

It was well that Hastings had regained his authority ; for in 1779 the Company's power was threatened by a combination of Indian Powers so dangerous that none but he could have combated it. At no period of its history has the British power in India been faced by a more formidable conjunction of perils than in 1779 and the following years ; and the fact that it emerged from the struggle without loss, and with greatly enhanced prestige, was wholly due to the courage, resolution and resourcefulness of Warren Hastings.

It is not possible, in the space at our disposal, to give any account of the complex and tortuous events which led up to this crisis. Enough to say that in the period when they were still free from the control of Calcutta, the two minor Presidencies of Madras and Bombay had involved themselves in serious difficulties with their neighbours ; and that

the hostile majority had been too busy in pursuing their vendetta against Hastings to rectify these blunders. Madras had alienated the terrible Hyder Ali by first making an alliance with him (1769), and then failing to help him in his need (1771); it had also needlessly quarrelled with the Nizam of Hyderabad. Bombay had plunged recklessly into the succession disputes which had broken out among the Mahrattas (1774), taking up the cause of the weaker candidate for the Peshwa's throne. Its action had been overridden by the majority at Calcutta, but they had shown such timorous deference to the reigning faction at Poona (who hated the British power) that they had only won its contempt (1776).

Meanwhile the war in America had begun; France was expected to intervene, and if she did so, it was certain that she would try to re-establish her position in India. In 1777 a French adventurer appeared at Poona, the Mahratta capital, with the offer of an alliance, and he was eagerly welcomed. Next year (1778) the French declared war, and it was known that a fleet and an army were to be sent to India. No help could be looked for from Britain: Hastings knew that the Company must fend for itself. He promptly seized the French posts in India; with the result that when the French fleet arrived (1782), it had no base of operations, and was able to achieve almost nothing. Meanwhile a new feud had broken out amongst the Mahrattas; and knowing that he must in any case count upon Mahratta hostility, Hastings allowed Bombay once more to intervene in the dispute. But this gave the signal to the other alienated princes. In 1779 the Nizam of Hyderabad formed a confederation with Hyder Ali and with all the Mahratta chieftains to drive the British into the sea; and Hastings found himself faced with a war against all the greatest Powers in India in combination, backed by a naval and military attack by France, while he knew that no help would be forthcoming from Britain, and could not count upon a single ally save Oudh, which had been reduced to impotence by the policy of Francis.

Ten years earlier such a combination would infallibly have involved utter and irretrievable ruin to the British power. Hastings' earlier work had alone made it possible to resist; but only his superb intrepidity and resourcefulness could have won success. He sent an army marching across the breadth of India to help Bombay; he sent another army by land from Calcutta to Madras. Both of the minor

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Presidencies were wholly dependent upon his support. And throughout the desperate conflict, which lasted for five years (1779-1784), no hostile army ever crossed the frontiers of Bengal, or of the allied State of Oudh; they were almost the only regions of India unravaged by the tide of war. Meanwhile, by patient and skilful negotiation, he gradually broke up the hostile confederacy. By remedying his legitimate grievance, he persuaded the Nizam to make peace. Bhonsla, one of the five great Mahratta chieftains, was persuaded to remain idle; Sindhia, the most powerful among them, was flattered by a request that he should act as mediator in arranging the terms of peace. But while he negotiated, Hastings also struck; and the dazzling feat of arms by which Sindhia's rock fortress of Gwalior, reputed to be impregnable, was captured by a tiny force under Captain Popham in 1780, had much to do with persuading that prince to play the part of mediator. By 1782 peace had been made with the Mahrattas on the basis of the *status quo ante bellum*. Meanwhile the terrible Hyder Ali had been defeated at Porto Novo (1781) by the veteran Eyre Coote; he also would have made peace but for the tardy arrival of the French (1782), with a fleet under Suffren, the greatest of French admirals, and a small land-force under the redoubtable Bussy, once the arbiter of Southern India.¹ The arrival of the French prolonged the war with Mysore, but it had no other effect. For even Suffren could achieve little without adequate bases; and the great confederacy which Bussy might have led had been broken up by Hastings' indomitable energy before he reached India.

But these heroic efforts involved a terrible strain upon the resources of Bengal. In the struggle to meet this strain, Hastings had to require from Oudh the fulfilment of its engagements to the Company. Oudh could not meet its engagements because it had been made bankrupt; and Hastings therefore authorised the Vizier to reclaim from the Begums the treasure which Francis and the majority had allowed them, without a shadow of right, to appropriate. Hastings also demanded from the rich vassal-Raja of Benares, subsidies in money and a contingent of troops. This was entirely in accordance with Indian usage. But the Raja was recalcitrant; he was suspected of intriguing against his suzerain. Hastings boldly went to Benares with a tiny body-guard and put him under arrest. The Raja thereupon revolted, his men killed Hastings' body-

¹ Vol. I. pp. 771 ff.

guard, and the Governor-General had to flee for a time to a neighbouring fortress. But even in this emergency he maintained his superb self-possession. He found troops to suppress the rising ; from his place of refuge he directed the military operations elsewhere, and carried on complex negotiations with the Mahrattas ; he even found time to write a detailed narrative of the episode, so calm and judicial in tone that any uninformed reader would be tempted to suppose that it had been penned in leisured peace. The affair of the Begums of Oudh, and the affair of the Raja of Benares, were later to be the main counts in the indictment against Hastings.

In the end the British power in India emerged (1784) from a desperate ordeal without gain, but also without loss, of territory ; and because it had held its own against tremendous odds, against the massed strength of the greatest Indian Powers, and without being able to draw upon aid from home, it emerged with a vastly heightened prestige, stronger than it had ever been. India was, indeed, the only part of the world where the British Commonwealth passed through the fiery ordeal of these years not merely without loss, but with an increase of repute.

§ 4. *The Act of 1784 and the Impeachment of Hastings.*

At the end of thirteen continuous years of effort and strain under the Indian sun, unbroken by even the shortest interval, Warren Hastings might well feel that he deserved thanks and recognition. The honour which he would have esteemed most highly would have been the opportunity of rendering further service. He longed to turn once more, with greater freedom and enlarged experience, to the interrupted task of creating a system of just and efficient government in Bengal. He was still in the prime of life, and at the height of his unmatched powers. But the opportunity was denied to him.

Since 1780 Francis had been assiduously at work in London. He had imposed on the imagination of Burke a nightmare picture of Hastings as an inhuman monster, and the Whigs had committed themselves to the condemnation of Hastings. Even amid the excitements of the American War, India had become a subject of first-rate political importance in Britain ; after the war it became a question on which ministries were made and unmade ; and there was fierce controversy between the admirers and the enemies of Hastings.

But all parties were agreed that there must be substantial changes in the system of government in British India ; for North's Regulating Act of 1773 was plainly unworkable. In 1783 Fox and Burke put forward their solution, in a bill which would have transferred the whole of the Company's political authority to Commissioners acting on behalf of the Crown. The bill was rejected by the House of Lords, and brought about the fall of the coalition ministry which introduced it.¹ If it had passed, the first use which the Whigs would have made of their power would have been to recall Hastings.

Next year (1784) Pitt took up the problem, and an India Act was passed which, in its main lines, continued to be the foundation of Indian government until 1858. It was a well designed measure, which retained the practical experience of the Board of Directors, but set up alongside of the Directors a Government Board of Control. All political orders and despatches had to be submitted to the Board of Control, which could amend or recast them ; and this meant that the controlling voice in the government of India was henceforth to be exercised by the responsible Government of Britain. Hastings would willingly have worked under such a system : he had always desired that the authority of the British Crown should make itself more effectively felt in Indian affairs.

But other features of the Act showed that the influence of Francis had counted for a good deal in the shaping of the new policy ; indeed, Dundas, who was Pitt's most intimate colleague, was almost as much under the influence of Francis as Burke. The Act included two clauses which definitely embodied two of Francis's most mischievous doctrines : the doctrine that the British power ought to take no part in Indian politics, but should abstain from treaty relations with Indian princes ; and the doctrine that the *zemindars* or hereditary collectors of land revenue should be regarded as the true landowners, and that a ' permanent settlement ' should be made with them. These doctrines continued for a generation, as we shall see, to exercise a pernicious influence upon the course of Indian affairs. If Hastings had been consulted, he would assuredly have pointed out the evil results which must follow from these principles. But it is significant that the man who understood India better than any other Englishman had ever done, who had rescued the British power in

¹ See below, Chap. viii. p. 107.

India from corruption and saved it from military destruction, was never consulted on the proposed changes in its government. He could not fail to recognise that there was no chance of his receiving the confidence and support without which his work could not be done. He resigned his post and said farewell to India in 1785.

Both before and after his departure he received unmistakable evidence that he had won the trust and affection not only of nearly all the British in India, but of the Indian peoples and princes with whom he had had dealings. But when he returned to England he received neither honour nor recognition: the greatest of the long line of British statesmen who have laboured in India, he was the only one of the series who received no honour from his sovereign.

But another reward was soon to come. The stored-up venom of Francis and the Whigs was to burst upon him; and in 1788 he was formally impeached before the House of Lords for gross misgovernment and corruption. His trial lasted for no less than seven years. During all that time he had to stand in the pillory, exposed to an extraordinary outpouring of unbridled invective and distortion of facts. His judges were befogged by the voluminousness and complexity of the material put before them; yet even so, they acquitted him on every point. But seven years of the prime of a great man's life were wasted. His savings were swallowed up by the costs of his defence; he was almost reduced to bankruptcy when in 1795 he was allowed to retire into obscurity, finding his only reward 'in the conscious applause of my own mind brightening the decline of my existence.' Britain, although she had already entered upon the severest ordeal of her history, had no further use for the greatest governing mind whom she had produced during the eighteenth century.

Yet, unjust and cruel as the impeachment of Hastings unquestionably was, the mere fact that it was possible was a sign that a new era was dawning in the history of the British Commonwealth. Burke, Fox, and their colleagues disgraced their cause by the rancour and virulence with which they pursued their noble and patient victim. But, when all is said, they were inspired by a passionate resolve that the British name should be freed from the suspicion of injustice or oppression in the government of dependent peoples. And it was a noble thing that a man whose greatness none denied, whose splendour of courage and resource had by universal consent faced and conquered terrible

odds, and who had laid deep for Britain the foundations of a mighty empire, should be held to strict account on the suspicion that his achievements had been stained by injustice. The work that Hastings did, and the long ordeal he had to endure, were alike auguries of a new spirit in the treatment of dependent peoples.

[Muir, *Making of British India*; Lyall or Trotter, *Warren Hastings*; Forrest, *Selections from the Despatches of Hastings* (with long and excellent introduction); Monckton Jones, *Hastings in Bengal, 1772-74*; Stephen, *Nuncomar and Impey*; Strachey, *The Rohilla War*; Gleig, *Life of Hastings*; Impey, *Life of Impey*; Merivale and Parkes, *Life of Francis*.]

CHAPTER VII

THE BEGINNING OF OPPOSITION IN IRELAND, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LEGISLATIVE INDEPENDENCE

(A.D. 1760-1782)

§ 1. *The Beginning of Organised Opposition, 1760-1770.*

AMONG the many new beginnings which distinguished the generation following the Seven Years' War, not the least important was the rise of opposition in Ireland to the ugly system of racial domination which had been established after the Revolution.¹ It is not too much to say that in these years the Irish question took its rise in the form in which it has baffled British statesmanship ever since; the form of a demand for national emancipation. The movement was quickened and stimulated by the American controversy. But it was not a mere by-product of that great issue. It began in the first years of the reign, before the American question had aroused any acute interest in either England or Ireland; and it had won its first victory before Irish public opinion began to be excited or encouraged by the agitation in America.

At the very opening of George III.'s reign Irish discontent, long quiescent, began to express itself in two agitations, the one economic, the other political, which were entirely unconnected one with the other. The economic agitation took the form of a series of organised agrarian outrages carried out by bands of men who called themselves 'Whiteboys' in Munster and Leinster, where their disorders began in 1761 and lasted for ten years: while in the Protestant North 'Oakboys' in 1763 and 'Steelboys' in 1771 caused similar but less violent disturbance. These movements seem to have had no political or religious character. They were the blind protest of a miserable and impoverished peasantry against what seemed to them the more immediate causes of their misery. But

¹ Vol. I. pp. 586 ff.

they were the beginning of a long series of sporadic agrarian outbreaks which lasted for a century and a half, and pointed to the need for a radical reform in the economic system. No immediate result of any kind followed from them.

Meanwhile a demand for political emancipation had begun in the Irish Parliament. Ireland had a Parliament of her own, an executive of her own, a distinct system of finance, and a separate army, paid for wholly by Irish taxation. But the Parliament was subordinated to the British Parliament, which could legislate over its head; even within these limits, its powers of legislation were subject, under Poynings' Acts,¹ to the approval of the English and Irish Privy Councils, and the most it could do was to propose heads of bills, which had to have the approval of the two Privy Councils before they could be passed through their stages and submitted for the royal assent. It represented only the Protestant minority of the population; and as its electoral system was even more anomalous than that of England or Scotland, a handful of magnates (known as the Undertakers) controlled an even larger proportion of seats than the Whigs did in England. Moreover there was no limit to the duration of an Irish Parliament save the life of the King; a single Parliament had sat throughout the thirty-three years of George II.'s reign. The Irish executive (with the Privy Council and the Lord-Lieutenant at its head) was under the control of the Crown, which disposed of all offices, and used them partly to reward political services in England, and partly as a means of making a majority in the Irish Parliament. The Irish army, which was proportionately much larger than that of England, was effectively at the disposal of the Crown; because there was no Mutiny Act in Ireland requiring regular renewal by the Irish Parliament, which thus lacked one of the essential means of control acquired at the Revolution by the English Parliament.

These conditions had been accepted without much protest during the first half of the eighteenth century, largely, no doubt, because the dominant minority in Ireland regarded their own power as depending upon the English supremacy, and because the old fear of the Catholics still survived. But that fear had now died down: and at the beginning of the reign of George III. a considerable party amongst the Protestant landowners who controlled the Irish Parliament began to agitate seriously for an enlargement of their own political privileges. The primary aim of this party was a

¹ Vol. I. p. 219.

limitation of the duration of Parliament by a Septennial Act like that of England; but they also desired a Mutiny Act which would establish parliamentary control over the army, an Act giving security of tenure to judges, and a *Habeas Corpus* Act; for all these fundamental safeguards of liberty, long established in England, were lacking in Ireland. Thus the movement of opposition in Ireland began among the dominant minority, and was at first limited to an attempt to reproduce in Ireland some of the characteristic features of the English Revolution settlement. Except on one point, no success was attained during the first ten years of the reign by this constitutional opposition. The one achievement of the period was the passing of the Octennial Act in 1768, whereby the duration of Irish Parliaments was limited to eight years. But during the long and all but fruitless discussions which led to this result, the National party (if it may be so described) was drawn on to question, more and more openly, the supremacy over Irish affairs claimed by the English Parliament. That wider question would certainly have been raised even if the American revolt had not forced it on.

And another factor was contributing to change the political situation in Ireland. Having overthrown the Whig oligarchy in England, George III. was anxious also to overthrow the corresponding oligarchy of the Irish 'Undertakers'—the group of borough-owners who normally controlled a majority in the Irish Parliament, and who had long been left to manage Irish affairs and to divide among themselves the spoils of office. Hitherto the Lord-Lieutenant had only visited Ireland for parliamentary sessions, held once in two years. Now they were required to remain in residence during their term of office, and to take the distribution of patronage into their own hands, as a means of building up a King's party and undermining the power of the 'Undertakers.' The results of this change were important. Government became more ready to make concessions in order to win support, and the passing of the Octennial Act (which the 'Undertakers' disliked) was in part due to this cause. Again, corruption had to be lavishly employed, with the result that the hereditary revenues of the Crown became inadequate, and Government became more dependent upon parliamentary grants. Finally the increased activity of the Lord-Lieutenant, and the fact that he received his orders from London, brought into high relief the subordination of Ireland to Britain. When all was said,

the 'Undertakers,' who had earlier been chiefly responsible for government, had been a group of leading Irishmen. Now the growing discontent, the growing resentment against the evils of the existing system, were brought into direct conflict with the British Government. Thus in several ways the problem of Irish government was becoming difficult even before the American question had begun seriously to occupy the minds of Irishmen.

§ 2. *The Influence of the American Controversy, and the Volunteer Movement.*

But the American controversy immensely intensified and accelerated the movement of opposition in Ireland. No one could fail to see the resemblance between the grievances of which the American colonists complained and those from which Ireland suffered. Ireland felt her political subordination to the British Parliament even more acutely than the colonies; while the trade system which was the ultimate source of American discontent pressed still more hardly upon Ireland. It was not surprising that the development of the American question was followed with the keenest interest. But there was no sign of any Irish revolutionary movement. Sympathy with the Americans was strongest among the Presbyterians of Ulster. The Catholics remained throughout quiescent; and the Catholic gentry sent in addresses of loyalty, and condemned the violence of the Americans. Among the Anglican minority the result of the American trouble was to strengthen the demands of the constitutional opposition in Parliament.

In 1776, when the first election under the Octennial Act took place, the numbers of the reformers were substantially increased; and they found an inspiring leader in Henry Grattan,¹ a Protestant gentleman of the highest integrity, of the broadest sympathies, and of a lofty eloquence unsurpassed by any British orator even in that age of eloquence. Under Grattan's leadership the opposition concentrated its attention upon two main aims—the removal of trade disabilities (the argument for which was strengthened by the distress caused by the interruption of American trade) and the establishment of legislative independence for the Irish Parliament.

With these main aims they combined a growing readiness

¹ There is a good short life of Grattan by R. Dunlop.

to forward measures for the relief of the Catholics ; and the appearance of this spirit in the Irish Parliament, which had invented the iniquities of the Penal Code, marked a noteworthy and very hopeful advance. Grattan was the chief advocate of Catholic relief ; ' the Irish Protestant,' he said, ' can never be free till the Irish Catholic has ceased to be a slave.' The Government of Lord North was not unfavourable to the Catholic claims ; and in 1778 its support ensured the passage of an Act which allowed Catholics to lease land for 999 years, and removed many of the degrading conditions hitherto imposed on landholders who were Catholics. Thus real reform in Ireland began with a measure for the relief of the Catholics ; a timid and partial measure, but one of good augury.

Lord North was willing also to make a large breach in the commercial restrictions hitherto imposed upon Ireland ; and in 1778 a bill was introduced into the British Parliament which would practically have established freedom of trade between Ireland and all the other members of the British Commonwealth in everything save wool and tobacco. But the selfishness of the English and Scottish trading houses was so much alarmed by these proposals, and such a storm of protest was raised, that North thought it necessary to give way. Little was left of the bill save a provision that Irish ships should be considered as British-built for the purposes of the Navigation Acts. So violent was the opposition of the chief trading centres that Burke lost his seat at Bristol because he had given his support to the bill.

Meanwhile the crisis of the war had come. France and Spain had entered the conflict against Britain. Ireland had to be denuded of troops to meet the dangers elsewhere. The French and Spanish fleets for a time controlled even the waters of the English Channel. There was real danger of a landing in Ireland, all the more since the French Government hoped to be assisted by an Irish rebellion. But these hopes were baseless. Ireland, Catholic as well as Protestant, remained staunchly loyal, as the agents of the French Government ruefully reported. Not only that, but Irishmen were eager to organise themselves for defence against a possible invasion, and fervent appeals for grants of arms to equip bodies of volunteers poured in to Government from all quarters, more especially from the seaboard counties. Government was loth to accept these proposals, or to put arms in private hands in a land where dreadful feuds had raged, and might easily break out afresh. But in view of

the undefended condition of the country, there was no alternative.

In any case, whether Government liked it or no, the volunteers, mostly under the command of peers and gentry, grew in numbers rapidly, and it was impossible to refuse to distribute among them the available arms. In the year 1779 the numbers of the volunteers had already risen to 42,000. They were nearly all Protestants, because Catholic enlistment was not encouraged; but the Catholics contributed voluntarily and generously to their equipment and upkeep. The enthusiasm and energy with which the volunteer movement was conducted were without doubt primarily due to the fear of a French invasion, and there was no sub-current of hostility to the British connexion, no sign of any plan to use force for severing it. But the mere fact of the formation of volunteer companies, and of their constant meetings for drill, transformed the whole political situation. The companies became, insensibly and naturally, political organisations; and a ferment of political discussion and political activity, to which Ireland was wholly unaccustomed, sprang into being.

The volunteers demanded, in particular, freedom of trade, as the only means of remedying the distress from which Ireland was suffering; and their resolutions on this head were backed by similar resolutions from grand juries, corporations, and other public bodies. But they did not stop at resolutions. They began to make 'non-importation agreements,' in imitation of the Americans, threatening a boycott of British goods until their grievances were redressed. The trading interests in Britain were brought to their senses by these threats; and at the end of 1779 and the beginning of 1780, Lord North secured the adoption of measures for the freeing of Irish trade which were much more liberal than the emasculated Act of 1778. In effect Ireland had now, thanks to the volunteers, complete equality with England and Scotland in imperial and foreign trade. And what is noteworthy is that she had won this boon without giving up her separate Parliament, which was the price Scotland had had to pay. The valuable rights which had made bargaining possible in the case of the Scottish union were in the Irish case conceded without any *quid pro quo*; and this very fact put difficulties, henceforth, in the way of any project of legislative union with Ireland.

The solution of a union was, indeed, discussed during these years in Government circles in England; but the

Lord-Lieutenant warned his colleagues not to put forward any such proposal, because it was certain to raise a storm of opposition. 'National feeling,' he said, 'would not hear of it.' The phrase is striking. National feeling had at last come awake in Ireland. And it was not limited to one section of the population. It affected the Anglican gentry, and the Scottish Presbyterians of the North, even more strongly than the Catholics. Seventy years earlier, in the generation following the Revolution, the project of union had been suggested from Ireland, but England would not listen; now it was suggested from England, and Ireland would not listen.

§ 3. *The National Spirit and Legislative Independence.*

Ireland would not listen because her people of all classes, and notably the dominant class of Anglican landowners, had made up their minds that the time had come to demand political as well as economic freedom, and the abrogation of the superior powers claimed by the British Parliament over the Irish Parliament. On April 19, 1780, Grattan introduced in the Irish Parliament what was ominously described as a Declaration of Independence. It seemed that the American model was being followed to an alarming extent. But there was a difference. Grattan's resolutions asserted that the Crown of Ireland was inseparably annexed to that of Great Britain, and that the two nations, under one sovereign, were indissolubly connected by a multitude of ties. They went on, however, to proclaim that no power on earth but the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland had any right to make laws for Ireland. The resolutions were shelved, but scarcely a voice was raised in defence of the legislative power of the British Parliament, even in the unrepresentative and corrupt Irish House of Commons. Then followed a direct attack on Poynings' Acts, which was defeated only by a narrow majority. And later in the same session an Irish Mutiny Act was introduced, on the plea that the British Act—hitherto always extended to Ireland—was not valid. Magistrates, indeed, were refusing to enforce it on this ground, and military discipline was threatened. ~~A Mutiny Act had to be passed,~~ though the very fact of its passing implied a denial of the legislative power of the British Parliament. Government succeeded in getting it made perpetual. But even so, the triumph was noteworthy.

The Irish Parliament, always hitherto the organ of an ascendancy, was becoming national in character, and was showing a vigour and an independence never hitherto displayed. These qualities were unquestionably due to the stimulus given by the nation-wide movement of the volunteers. And meanwhile the volunteers themselves were entering upon a new stage in their development. At first they had arisen as spontaneous and disconnected local companies. At the beginning of 1780 their leaders began to plan a national organisation; and a number of reviews were arranged, in which many corps took part. This went on through 1781, while the numbers of the volunteers still increased; towards the end of 1781 they had risen to 80,000 men. The national organisation of the volunteers intensified the political agitation, which became so formidable, and was now so obviously backed by a threat of force, that some who had hitherto strongly supported the movement drew away from it, on the ground that it was tending to become unconstitutional. It was, indeed, *pessimi exempli* that great changes should not only be advocated but triumphantly carried by the pressure of armed force; an unhappy lesson was being taught, even though the proceedings of the volunteers were strictly orderly, and their sentiments thoroughly loyal.

Parliament was now showing too little zeal and vigour for the volunteers, who were annoyed that it should submit to the continuance of Poynings' Acts. Led by Grattan and Lord Charlemont, the volunteers of Ulster, always the most vigorous, decided to hold a general congress at Dungannon, at which all the corps of that province should be represented. This remarkable assemblage, which met in a Protestant church in February 1782, framed a series of resolutions, in which they formally denied the right of anybody save the Irish Parliament to legislate for Ireland, pledged themselves to oppose any parliamentary candidate who did not undertake to support this view, and appointed a committee to act for the body of volunteers and to summon similar congresses at intervals. Perhaps the most significant of the resolutions, considering that it was passed with only one dissentient by a purely Protestant assembly of Ulstermen meeting in a Protestant church, was a declaration in favour of freedom of conscience and of sympathy with the Roman Catholics.

A few days after the Dungannon meeting Grattan moved in the Irish House of Commons an address to the King

asserting the legislative independence of Ireland; and although Government was able to obtain a postponement of the question, there was no doubt as to the feeling either of the House or of the nation. 'The principle of Ireland not being bound by the laws of another legislature,' wrote the Lord-Lieutenant to the Government in London, 'is universally insisted upon with an enthusiasm and steady determination which leave no reason to imagine that it will be abandoned,' and it had become clearly impossible to maintain the old system. Grand juries were, in fact, on all hands refusing to enforce British laws, recognising only the statutes of the Irish Parliament. Even Lord North's Lord-Lieutenant, the Earl of Carlisle, insisted that these facts must be recognised and accepted.

Meanwhile a change had come about in the government of Great Britain. In March 1782 Lord North's Government resigned, and the Whigs came into power. A month later their Lord-Lieutenant arrived in Dublin; and two days after his arrival Grattan, in the greatest of all his orations, moved in the Irish Parliament a Declaration of Rights and Grievances. He described the unanimity of the Irish people of all sects and classes in the demand for legislative independence, which 'united the Protestant with the Catholic, and the landed proprietor with the people.' What they demanded, he said, was neither more nor less than 'liberty according to the frame of the British constitution,' to be enjoyed in perpetual connexion with the British Empire. He emphasised the fact that, even though the apparent conflict lay between Ireland and Great Britain, yet it was from Britain that Ireland had learned the nature of the political liberties she desired. The tone of the speech bears a remarkable resemblance to Burke's great vision of a fellowship of free peoples bound by the ties of a common enjoyment of liberty; and with Burke's noble utterance it may be linked, as a proclamation of the ideal of a commonwealth of nations, put forth at the dark moment which saw the ruin of the first British Empire, but which also saw the beginning of a new era.

There was no resisting a demand so clear and so unanimous as that which Grattan expressed. The Whigs, who had vaguely hoped to find some *via media*, accepted the inevitable; and, to their credit, did what had to be done with generous completeness. The Declaratory Act of George I.¹ was repealed; the control over the Irish Parliament

¹ Vol. I. p. 692.

wielded by the two Privy Councils under Poynings' Acts was done away with; in short, as Grattan summarised it, 'Great Britain gives up *in toto* every claim to authority over Ireland.' The Whigs had intended that part of the new settlement should be an agreement or treaty between the two kingdoms whereby 'the connexion between them should be established by mutual consent upon a solid and permanent footing.' But no treaty was made. Ireland was left with no formal connexion with Great Britain other than the Crown; she was in the same position which Scotland had occupied between the Revolution and the Act of Union—with full control over all her own affairs, and with a Parliament so free and unfettered that it could, if it chose, pursue a policy wholly incompatible with that of Great Britain.

[Lecky, *History of Ireland in the 18th Century*, and *Leaders of Irish Public Opinion* (for Flood and Grattan); Swift Macneill, *Constitutional and Parliamentary History of Ireland till the Union*; Dunlop, *Henry Grattan*; Barry O'Brien (ed.), *Two Centuries of Irish History*.]

CHAPTER VIII

THE BEGINNING OF POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION IN BRITAIN

(A.D. 1775-1793)

§ 1. *The Significance of the Period : some Dominant Personalities.*

As in Ireland, so in Britain, the American Revolution brought about great political changes. The failure of the war discredited the King's system of government, which had seemed to be firmly established in 1775, and led to its downfall. In its place, after a sharp tussle between George III. and the Whigs, in which neither side was successful, the system of government by a cabinet jointly responsible to Parliament, which had existed under Walpole but had never been fully accepted as part of the working British constitution, was definitely re-established under the leadership of the younger Pitt. That is perhaps the main political result of these years. It was an important result, because this method of government—which differs widely from the form of popular government adopted during these very years in the United States—was to become characteristic of all the self-governing members of the British Commonwealth, and was to be imitated in most of the civilised countries of the world.

But the cabinet system depends upon the existence of organised political parties. During the period with which we are concerned in this chapter, the groups of the earlier part of the reign disappeared, and were replaced by the two solid organised parties of Whigs and Tories, perpetually in opposition to each other. The solidity of parties depends very largely upon whether or no they possess leaders capable of inspiring loyalty and zeal in their followers. In Charles Fox and the younger Pitt these years saw the emergence of the first of the long series of pairs of rival leaders who have dominated the course of British politics since that date.

But the importance of the period does not lie only in the

reorganisation of the system of government. A strenuous attempt was also made to purify and liberalise it. The machinery of organised corruption was attacked and largely destroyed. A great attempt was also made to get rid of the worst anomalies of the electoral system, and to make Parliament more genuinely representative of the nation. The attempt was nearly successful. If it had succeeded before the storm of the French Revolution burst, it would have saved Britain from many ills. But even though it failed, it formed the beginning of the movement towards democracy which was to win its triumph in the nineteenth century.

But these large issues emerged only gradually. During the first years of the American War, and down to the intervention of France in 1778, the King's system appeared to be triumphant and beyond challenge. The opposition was so disheartened that its leaders almost ceased to attend to their parliamentary duties. What is more, there were deep differences of opinion between the two wings of the opposition, the main body of the Whigs and the followers of Lord Chatham. How real these differences were may best be illustrated by a brief analysis of the three outstanding political figures of the time—Shelburne, Burke, and Fox.

Lord Shelburne, who was Chatham's first lieutenant, and succeeded to the leadership of his party on Chatham's death in 1778, had a contemporary reputation for untrustworthiness which is not substantiated by any single episode in his career, but which gravely damaged his public work. He was one of the most thoughtful and well-informed men of his time, and in sentiment a Radical. The friend and patron of Bentham, Adam Smith and Priestley, he was a free trader and something of a democrat. He advocated parliamentary reform, which the Whigs loathed; he understood and admired the work of Warren Hastings, whom the Whigs reviled; he feared the power of the Whig oligarchy even more than that of the Crown; and in America, while he was willing to encourage a great expansion of self-government, extending even to the election of Governors by the colonists, he could not reconcile himself to the dissolution of the Empire, which the Whigs contemplated with equanimity. Shelburne was, in brief, the forerunner of the free-trade Radical Imperialists of the nineteenth century.¹

On almost every point there was a fundamental difference

¹ See below, Bk. IX. chap. x. p. 421.

of outlook between Shelburne and Burke,¹ the philosophic guide of the orthodox Whigs. For Burke was the apologist of the Whig tradition, which Shelburne detested; and it was Burke's instinct to distrust, and Shelburne's to welcome, new ideas and sweeping doctrines. Like all good Whigs, Burke genuinely loved liberty and hated oppression: he had shown it by his attitude on Ireland, on India, on America. But he thought of liberty as something that was perpetually endangered by unchecked power, and best safeguarded by traditional rights and by the entrenched social and political privileges of a public-spirited aristocracy. He idealised the Whig régime of the past; he equally idealised the Whig magnates of his own day, to whose service he devoted his glorious gifts of intellect and imagination, 'giving up to party what was meant for mankind.' In the great constitutional controversy of the day his primary aim was to bridle the Crown by stripping it of the patronage by means of which it had overthrown the Whigs. But he trembled at the thought of any great change in the parliamentary system, precisely because this would undermine the power of the aristocracy.

In these years Burke was being put into the shade, as the inspirer of the Whig party, by a brilliant young recruit who had crossed over from the Government benches in 1774. At the moment of his conversion Charles Fox² was best known as the most reckless spendthrift and gambler in English society; and he remained a gambler to the end of his days, and even carried into politics something of the gambler's devil-may-care *abandon*. It was reckless high spirits, rather than principles, which caused him in 1774 to fling away his chances of political promotion when his foot was fairly planted on the ladder; for at first he had entered politics as a game. But then he came under the influence of Burke; and his natural frankness and generosity of mind were enriched from that deep well of political wisdom. He never acquired any solid political knowledge, nor was he ever strong in balance of judgment. But the gambler's recklessness was transmuted into an uncalculating ardour and generosity in the advocacy of great causes, which made him a magnificent leader, especially in a losing cause. Beyond all things he hated anything that savoured of oppression: when he smelt oppression, his impetuosity burst all bounds.

¹ There is a classical short life of Burke by Lord Morley.

² There is a good short life of Fox by J. L. Hammond; and Trevelyan's *Early Life of C. J. Fox* is a brilliant and vivid study.

This is why he pursued Warren Hastings with such fury and why he carried his advocacy of the American cause so far as to rejoice openly at the reports of American victories, and even to come down to the House of Commons dressed in the American colours.

In Fox's view the King was the source of all his country's ills; and the overthrow of the King's power became the object of his life. From 1775 onwards British politics consisted largely of a duel between George III. and the brilliant, generous-hearted, reckless gambler who had become the genius of the Whig party, and who was transforming its timid and tepid respectability into something much more vehement and fiery.

§ 2. *The Renewed Conflict between George III. and the Whigs, 1778-1782.*

The declaration of war by France in 1778 and by Spain in 1779 revived the spirits and the vigour of the opposition. Blaming the Government for the accumulating misfortunes of the country, they began to direct against the King's system a sustained and vigorous attack. The main grounds of the attack were the 'costliness and mismanagement of the war, and the need for drastic economics. By insisting upon economy the Whigs hoped to destroy the foundations of the King's power, by depriving him of the means of corruption. In 1778 they introduced a bill for the exclusion of contractors from the House of Commons—the granting of lucrative contracts to members having been one of North's methods of influencing votes. In 1779 Burke gave notice of a yet more important measure, a bill for economical reform, the object of which was to abolish a large number of offices which were of no value except for purposes of corruption. It was introduced in full detail in 1780, and supported by one of Burke's greatest oratorical efforts. In the same year a third bill, for disfranchising revenue officers, was introduced: these officers, who were habitually required to vote for Government on pain of losing their places, themselves desired to be released from this humiliating position; and it was said that their votes were enough to turn the election in no less than seventy constituencies. Taken together, these three bills would go far to root out the corrupt influences which had defiled Parliament ever since the Revolution, and indeed earlier.

But it was useless to introduce resolutions and bills in

Parliament against North's standing majority, unless they were supported by a powerful demand outside Parliament. The organisation of this demand was the work of Christopher Wyvill, a wealthy parson who never visited his parish, but lived on his estate in Yorkshire. Wyvill persuaded the Sheriff of Yorkshire to summon a county meeting, which was held at York on December 30, 1779; and the nobles, gentry, and freeholders who attended unanimously adopted a petition to Parliament in favour of 'economical reform,' which was subsequently signed by nearly 9000 freeholders. The example of Yorkshire was followed by twenty-eight counties, and a large number of cities and boroughs. No such nation-wide demonstration had ever before been seen. It was, indeed, the beginning of the use of public meetings for political ends.

The county meetings were not enough for Wyvill; he got them to elect standing committees, and to send representatives to attend a conference in London—the first of its kind. Nor was he satisfied with mere 'economical reform.' *The movement for parliamentary reform, started in 1769, was not dead; and Wyvill resolved to use his organisation to forward this kindred cause.* This was early in 1780. In April of the same year an influential group of peers and gentlemen started a Society for Constitutional Information, which devoted considerable funds to the free distribution of tracts, sermons, and pamphlets advocating reform—some of them going so far as to demand annual parliaments, universal suffrage, and vote by ballot. Thus systematic propaganda also came into use for the political education of the British people; and the demand for a democratic order was put forward, a decade before the French Revolution.

These developments went much further than most of the Whig leaders desired. For the Whigs as a whole, including Burke, were strongly opposed to a reform of the franchise; though Charles Fox was not unready to do something, and one Whig duke, the Duke of Richmond, was even an extreme reformer. It was only among the Chathamite group that franchise reform had real support: the Whigs were eager to destroy the foundations of the King's power, but not the foundations of their own. But they were not slow to use the wave of public feeling which the agitation had raised. Their three bills did much better in Parliament in 1780 because of it, though they were still unsuccessful. What was more striking, a Whig resolution, 'that the influence of

the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished, was actually carried by a majority in the House of Commons. Evidently the Parliament of 1780 was wavering in its steadfastness; the independent country gentlemen were deserting the Government. In the hope of getting a more amenable House, the King dissolved Parliament; and in the election which followed the new methods of agitation were fully employed. For the first time in English history the electors were asked to send representatives with a definite 'mandate.' The results were a little disappointing to the reformers, for Government obtained a solid majority. But there was a new public interest in the contest. 'Hitherto I have been elected in Lord Rockingham's drawing-room,' said Sir George Savile, member for Yorkshire; 'now I am returned by my constituents.'

The new Parliament was to take part in a real, if silent, political revolution during the four years of its existence. And it included some new members, two in particular, who were to play noteworthy parts. One was, Sheridan, the dazzling wit and playwright, who added his brilliant oratory to the strength of the Whigs. The other was young Pitt,¹ second son of Lord Chatham, who came in at a bye-election at Appleby during the first year, being then just of age; and naturally took his place among the followers of his father and of Shelburne.

If victory had gone to oratory the side which included Burke, Fox, Pitt, and Sheridan ought to have won. But the King and Lord North still commanded the votes. Something more powerful than county associations was needed to overthrow them. The blow came from America. In October 1781 Yorktown capitulated, and the disaster brought down Lord North. He resigned in March 1782; and at last opportunity was open to the opposition. The King had to call in the Whigs and allow them to use the prestige and power of Government for the overthrow of the system he had built up with such pains.

§ 3. *George III., Charles Fox, William Pitt, 1782-1784.*

The two wings of the opposition entered office in partnership, Fox and Shelburne acting as Secretaries of State with Lord Rockingham as Prime Minister. But from the first

¹ There is an admirable short life of Pitt by Lord Rosebery, in the 'Twelve English Statesmen' Series.

there was friction between the two groups among the victors : Shelburne and Fox, who had charge of the peace negotiations, could not see eye to eye ; and the King waited confidently for a breach between them. But there was one question on which all were agreed. The programme of economical reform was at once put into operation. Contractors were excluded from the House of Commons ; revenue officers were disfranchised ; and Burke's immense and complicated plan for cutting down the vast list of offices was carried. One of the offices which disappeared was the Secretaryship of State for the Colonies, which had been set up in 1768 : most of its work had gone. Taken as a whole these Acts marked a real constitutional advance. They put an end to the direct corruption of the House of Commons. They imposed upon Government the necessity of getting the required support in Parliament by other means. But the only other means available was organised party loyalty. And there was no such loyalty between the two groups who now divided power.

The victory of the reformers had been won, so far as economical reform was concerned. But the greater question of electoral reform was still untouched ; because the Whigs would have nothing to do with it. This gave an opening to young Pitt. Eager to make his name, he came forward as the leader of the reform party, and moved in Parliament that a committee of inquiry be appointed. The motion was lost, but only by twenty votes. Greatly encouraged, the reformers summoned a meeting at the Thatched House Tavern, which Pitt attended, and which, for that reason, was later to be famous. It was decided that the national agitation should be stimulated as much as possible. The county meetings started again, and a rain of petitions poured in upon the House of Commons, demanding reform, and proclaiming that the House no longer represented the nation. A real national movement was afoot.

Meanwhile the feud between the two sections of the ministry had resulted in a cleavage. Rockingham, the Prime Minister, died (July 1782). Shelburne and Fox had quarrelled fatally, and neither would serve under the other. The King, having to choose between them, naturally chose Shelburne rather than the hated Whigs ; whereupon Fox and Burke and all their phalanx went into opposition, and young Pitt, at the age of twenty-three, entered the ministry as Chancellor of the Exchequer. These changes augured well for the cause of reform. The group in power was the

most generally favourable to that cause of any group in politics ; and the accepted leader of the reformers was in office. The hopes of the reformers rose high.

Shelburne had, indeed, no secure majority. Even including all those who normally voted with Government, and all the Whigs who had not followed Fox, he could only count upon 140 votes. Fox had 90 ; and 120 members still looked to North as their leader. Any two of these groups could defeat the third. But it seemed unthinkable that Fox and North should combine. Could North go back upon his whole career by lending himself to an attack upon the King ? Could Fox join hands with North, upon whom he had so long been pouring unbridled denunciation, and from whom, if his speeches went for anything, he differed on every point of principle and policy ? But the dominating purpose of the Whigs was to overthrow the King, and to put him in manacles ; and to Charles Fox, the gambler, it seemed legitimate to use any cards that came into his hands in order to win the game. The unholy compact was made. Shelburne's ministry was defeated ; and the King was compelled to accept a coalition ministry.

In the eyes of most of the nation, as in the King's eyes, the coalition of Fox and North was an unpardonable exhibition of lack of principle in politics. The dire punishment which was soon to follow it gave rise to the saying that England does not love coalitions. It ruined the career of Charles Fox, who never quite recovered from the reputation for insincerity with which it branded him. To reformers, especially, from whom it seemed to have snatched away their chance of success, it appeared an unforgivable crime ; and, though Fox had advocated reform, he lost all the confidence of the reformers. Henceforward Fox and Pitt stood forth before the nation in sharp rivalry ; and all the advantage seemed to lie on the side of the boy statesman.

At the moment, however, the coalition seemed to have fully attained its purpose. The King was beaten ; and Charles Fox was free to organise his victory so as to reduce the Crown for ever to its old subjection. But the triumph was short-lived. The only important measure which the coalition was able to undertake was a bill for the better government of India. It proposed that all the political authority, and all the patronage, of the Company should be transferred to a Commission, to be appointed in the first instance by Parliament, and later by the Crown. But these

proposals, though they were honestly meant as an attempt to remedy the defects of the existing government in India, were manifestly open to misinterpretation. The vast patronage of the East India Company was to be transferred to a purely Whig body ; for all the commissioners proposed were Whigs. This might be represented as a cunning device to win for the Whigs a mass of patronage which would enable them to buy all the support they needed. They had just destroyed the royal patronage which formed the traditional means of corrupting the House of Commons, in order to weaken the King. Was this a hypocritical trick to get a new means of corruption with which the King could not meddle, and so re-establish the oligarchy ? Brought against the authors of the coalition, the accusation had some plausibility. George III. saw that the enemy had delivered himself into his hands. He stimulated the House of Lords to reject the bill. Then he contemptuously dismissed the coalition from power, knowing that he would have public feeling behind him ; and invited young Pitt, the bearer of a splendid name and the hope of the reformers, to form a ministry (December 1783).

Pitt had already given a further proof of his zeal for reform by introducing three resolutions on the subject into Parliament, and the coalition majority had refused even to discuss them. His accession to power was welcomed with enthusiasm, especially by the reformers. But his position was extremely difficult. An almost untried youth of twenty-four, he had to bear alone the burden of debate in the House of Commons against a large hostile majority which included all the most brilliant speakers. For three months he carried on the struggle with wonderful courage and self-confidence, until, in March 1784, Parliament was dissolved. Fox stormed against the unconstitutional action of the King, and sent up addresses demanding the removal of ministers not supported by a majority in Parliament, which was sound constitutional doctrine. Pitt replied by promising that as soon as the necessary formal business had been done, there should be a dissolution and an appeal to the people ; to which Fox answered by protesting that the King had no right to dissolve Parliament in the middle of the session, and by obstructing necessary public business. He thus put himself in the wrong, and enabled reformers to say that the Whigs, bent on oligarchy, would not even submit to the judgment of the nation. The election which followed showed that, unrepresentative as the electoral system was, an excited

nation could still use it as a means of expressing strong feeling. The reformers worked with enthusiasm for Pitt. Fox's followers were simply swept away; 160 of them lost their seats. The downfall of the Whigs was irreparable and complete. The hopes of a restoration of the oligarchy followed into limbo the system built up by the King and Lord North; and the youthful Prime Minister entered upon his real tenure of power with an extraordinary hold upon the public imagination.

§ 4. *The Government of the Younger Pitt, 1784-1793.*

It was expected by the reformers, who had contributed effectively to secure Pitt's sweeping victory, that its first result would be the realisation of their hopes; and when Pitt announced that he would introduce a Reform Bill in 1785 their triumph seemed to be assured. But they did not know their leader. All that he did to fulfil the expectations he had aroused was to ask leave to introduce a bill, the terms of which he did not even define; they seem to have been limited to a vicious scheme for buying out pocket-boroughs, thus recognising them as property. He left the House free to vote as it thought fit; the House refused him leave; and it would appear that Pitt was neither surprised nor much disappointed. From that day onwards he never raised a hand for reform, never tried to convert his followers, or to stimulate the demand in the country. The reformers were deeply disappointed, and their enthusiasm was chilled. Before another general election took place, the French Revolution had broken out, and the passions it aroused made such changes more difficult than ever. After using it for his own purposes, Pitt had, in truth, effectually damped down a very healthy and promising national movement; and in doing so he had done a great disservice to his country. For a scheme of reform carried through before the French Revolution would have saved the country from many ills.

Pitt's treatment of the reform movement, which had given him his chance in high politics, illustrates in a striking way the distinctive limitations and qualities of a very remarkable man. Like Walpole before him, he was anxious to avoid creating public excitement, because he was persuaded that what the country needed after the strain of recent years was a period of quiescence and of restorative statesmanship, especially in the sphere of finance. A great

excitement, such as a reform campaign would arouse, might endanger this ; and Pitt's intense love of power, and unwillingness to risk losing it, reinforced this consideration. In the same way, and for the same reasons, while he declared his support of the movement for the abolition of the slave-trade,¹ and spoke and voted in favour of Wilberforce's motions on the subject, he never risked his own political fortunes on this cause. The abolition of the slave-trade was therefore delayed until after Pitt's death, when his old rival Fox, then a dying man enjoying a short spell of power with a precarious majority, forced the question through with characteristic vigour.

As these instances show, the young minister, great man as he was, was incapable of the self-forgetful if sometimes unbalanced ardour of his generous rival. He could appreciate intellectually the importance of great causes such as parliamentary reform or the abolition of the slave-trade ; but he could not be impassioned by them. But to say this is not to say that he was not a very great man indeed, and if he was eaten up by ambition, his ambition was the noble one of spending laborious days and anxious nights in the service of his country. He shared with his father a superb self-confidence, a serene contempt for money which was even more marked in him than in the elder statesman, and an undeviating and whole-hearted patriotism. Like his father he was a solitary man, cultivating an Olympian aloofness and enjoying few intimacies ; and there was something almost inhuman in his utter absorption in public affairs. No doubt he suffered from his premature immersion in politics. He came to them so young, before he had seen the world as a man among his fellows. But there was in this lonely man, who was never young, a steely firmness, a serene assurance of power, which was an immense strength in times of crisis, and justified the admiring though rather distant devotion with which he was regarded by his followers. When the world reeled and empires crashed, this man could stand unshaken.

Though he was a man of much loftier aims and far greater intellectual power than Walpole, yet Walpole is of all English statesmen the one whom he most nearly resembled in the character and direction of the work which he preferred to do. Like Walpole, his chief interest lay in the sphere of finance ; like Walpole, he did his country the real and solid service of using an interval of peace for healing and restoring

¹ See below, Chap. x. p. 133.

work which enabled it to pass through a crisis when it came. And the work which he did bears a striking resemblance to Walpole's.

In the first place he restored to full efficiency the system of cabinet government in dependence upon Parliament ; a system which Walpole had first fully wrought out, but which had never been quite satisfactorily handled since his time. George III. may have hoped, when the Whigs were defeated, that the personal authority he had enjoyed in North's time would be restored. But Pitt was no North, content to be the mere agent of his master's will, and to allow his colleagues to deal separately with that master. He was as definitely the head of his own cabinet as Walpole had been, and insisted upon cabinet discipline and joint cabinet responsibility. After Pitt's time the theory of cabinet government, with the Prime Minister as its keystone, was never again challenged or misunderstood.

In the second place Pitt, like Walpole, emphasised the supremacy of the House of Commons by remaining a member of that body throughout his career, and making its opinion the test of his policy. But the House of Commons was now a different body from what it had been in Walpole's time. The great body of placemen, upon whom governments had relied, had largely disappeared, thanks to economical reform ; and Government had to depend upon the steady support of an organised party. The groups and cliques which had long competed for office had practically disappeared, and the House was definitely divided between the two great parties, Whigs and Tories, perpetually embattled one against the other. The strong personalities of the two leaders emphasised this cleavage, which was to be, for a long time to come, distinctive of the British system. Pitt was, in effect, the creator of a new Tory party, unhampered by obsolete theories about divine right, and not by any means committed to opposition to all change, but acting on the principle that large changes should never be made unless and until they are unmistakably needed and demanded, and that the main function of Government is to govern.

Next to Pitt's contribution to the settlement of the British system of government, and in his own view at least as important, was his work in dealing with the urgent problems left by a period of war and of maladministration. We have already seen¹ how, in the India Act of 1784, he found an

¹ Chap. vi. p. 86.

eminently sane and workable solution of one great imperial problem. We shall see in a later chapter¹ how, in the Canada Act of 1791, he dealt with another imperial problem of quite a different kind, on sound traditional lines. He tried, also, in 1785 to find a solution for the difficult relations between Britain and Ireland set up by the grant of legislative independence. His plan was to turn Great Britain and Ireland into a fiscal unit by agreement between the two Parliaments. The Irish Parliament was ready to agree; but the scheme was defeated by the jealousy of English commercial interests, and, having burnt his fingers, Pitt dropped the subject, as he had dropped parliamentary reform, not to return to it until the pressure of circumstances forced him to do so.

But the part of his work upon which Pitt himself placed the highest value was the reorganisation of national finance. When he took office the permanent debt had risen to the unprecedented figure of £224,000,000; there was also a large floating or unfunded debt; there was an annual deficit of many millions; national credit was seriously impaired; and the whole system of taxation was in a state of incredible confusion and complexity. By unremitting labour, especially during the years 1785-1787, he evolved order out of chaos. He overhauled the whole system of taxation. Many commodities were burdened with a number of separate duties, assigned to different purposes, which involved needless expense in administration. Pitt made a whole new book of rates, with a single duty on each article. In many cases the duties were so heavy that wholesale smuggling was encouraged: scientific treatment of the tariff, and in some cases a considerable reduction of duty, at once increased the revenue, reduced prices, and diminished smuggling. In the case of tea, for example, the duty was reduced from 110 to 12½ per cent. The floating debt was funded. The annual deficit disappeared. And in 1786 a sinking fund for the redemption of the debt was established; £1,000,000 per annum being set aside to accumulate at compound interest, a provision which should have extinguished the debt in twenty-eight years. So long as the £1,000,000 was provided by a real surplus of income over expenditure, these calculations were sound enough. Unfortunately this state of things only lasted seven years; for the outbreak of the French war substituted deficits for surpluses. Pitt, however, imagining that there was some-

¹ Chap. xi. p. 138.

thing magical in the working of compound interest, insisted upon keeping his sinking fund going even when this involved borrowing money at a higher rate of interest to pay off debt at a lower rate of interest. This strange blunder not only cost the nation very dear, but forms a serious blot on Pitt's reputation as a financier. Nevertheless his work in this field was a real and great service to the community. It restored national credit, helped Britain to recover with surprising rapidity from the strain of the last war, and made her ready to face the more terrible strain which was soon to fall upon her.

Though the organisation of national finance was a great public service, it involved no novel principle. But in 1786 Pitt concluded a commercial treaty with France, whereby the goods of each country were to be admitted on more favourable terms to the other; and this constituted a definite breach with the traditions of Whig policy which had governed the regulation of foreign trade ever since the Revolution. It was the teaching of Adam Smith, whose disciple he was, that led Pitt to the adoption of this policy. From Adam Smith he derived the belief that the exchange of trade is profitable to both sides, and that France could not send goods to Britain without directly or indirectly taking British goods in exchange. In the debates on the treaty Fox denounced it in accordance with traditional Whig principles, on the ground that trade policy ought to be conceived with the view of doing damage to France, since every increase in the prosperity of France increased her power to injure Britain. Here, at any rate, Pitt spoke the language of enlightenment, Fox of obscurantism. But Fate did not permit of any development of the new policy thus inaugurated. Within seven years Britain was at war with France, and the treaty became a dead letter. In this, as in other spheres, the work of Pitt is seen by the modern reader overshadowed by the coming cloud of the French Revolution, which made his wisdom seem futile, and doubled the evil effects of his limitations.

§ 5. *Britain and Europe on the Eve of the French Revolution.*

If the nearness of the coming storm makes a just estimate difficult in regard to the work of these years even in domestic affairs, it seems still more to reduce to insignificance the diplomacy of the period, which appears curiously unreal and

futile under that menacing shadow. But it is important to note that, before the Revolution began, Pitt had brought Britain back into the diplomatic discussions of the Powers, in which she had practically taken no share during the period of political confusion we have been surveying. Pitt had no large or imaginative conceptions in foreign policy. He conceived no plans for the welfare of Europe. He was not a European statesman, but purely a British statesman; and his sole concern, as it was the concern of Walpole before him, was to avoid war, and to save his country from the danger of being friendless in a great crisis as she had been during the last war.

The peace of Europe seemed to be endangered by three factors in the European situation. The first of these was the ambition of France, and her close connexion with Spain; and this naturally seemed, after recent experiences, to be the most menacing to Britain. The second was the still acute jealousy of Austria and Prussia, and their competition for the leadership of Germany; they had been at war in 1778 and 1779; they were constantly fighting a diplomatic battle; and though the old rivals had died, Maria Theresa in 1780 and Frederick the Great in 1786, the mutual hostility of their successors was never more than veiled. The third factor was the rapid and alarming growth of the power of Russia under Catherine the Great, who dominated Poland, and seemed likely to overthrow and conquer the Turkish Empire. With all these three factors Pitt made some attempt to deal; he dealt with none of them very successfully.

He came in conflict with France over the question of Holland, where a republican party was trying to overthrow the house of Orange, with the moral support of France. Instead of insisting that the Dutch must settle their own problems of government, Pitt joined hands with Prussia to re-establish the Orange party; and in the end a Triple Alliance of Britain, Prussia, and Holland was formed (1788). This was regarded as a great diplomatic victory, because it was supposed to give Britain support and security against the French danger. In fact it taught the republicans of Holland to regard Britain as their enemy and France as their friend, and this had its influence during the coming wars. There was a conflict also with Spain when in 1789 Spain expelled a British settlement from Nootka Sound (Vancouver Island). War seemed near; the fleet was mobilised; and Spain appealed to France for aid. But

France was already in the throes of revolution, and could do nothing. Nootka Sound (which meant the Northern Pacific coast of America) remained British.

In 1790 the long-standing rivalry of Austria and Prussia threatened to break out in a violent war. The impatient reforming zeal of the Emperor Joseph II. had brought about such unrest in his dominions that there seemed to be real danger of the Habsburg power breaking up. Belgium was in open revolt, and had declared a republic; there was a widespread revolt in Hungary; and meanwhile a war, carried on in alliance with Russia, was raging against the Turks. Prussia was anxious to use this opportunity to attack Austria, and she hoped to draw in Britain under the Triple Alliance. Pitt refused to take part in this design, and helped in the restoration of amicable relations between the two German powers, which was later to make possible their combined attack on France. But his refusal to join with Prussia reduced the vaunted Triple Alliance to a nullity.

The third problem of the period was the inability of the Turks to resist Catherine of Russia, whose generals were winning startling victories; there seemed to be a possibility that the Turkish power would collapse, and that Russia would reach Constantinople. This seemed to Pitt a grave danger; and he even went so far as to issue an ultimatum to Catherine. But the ultimatum was contemptuously disregarded; and Pitt had to accept the slight before the eyes of Europe. The importance of the episode was not only that it undermined British influence in Europe at a critical moment on the eve of the revolutionary war, but still more that it marked the beginning of the hostility to Russia which was, with few and brief intervals, to have a dominating influence in British policy for a century to come. The debates in the House of Commons on this question had a startlingly modern air; they might almost have been spoken a century later, in the duel between Disraeli and Gladstone. Pitt, the founder of the new Toryism, like his distant successor, laid stress on the necessity of protecting the 'integrity of the Turkish Empire'; Burke and Fox almost anticipated the language of Gladstone in their protests against using the power of Britain to bolster up the tyranny of the Turk over Christian peoples, and against the folly of unreasoning dread of Russia.

It was thus with the discredit of a rather humiliating failure that Pitt turned to deal with the terrible problem of

rampant Revolution. His nine years of peaceful power had been an unconscious preparation for this ordeal. And if it is impossible to feel an unalloyed admiration for the work of these nine years, at least it must be recognised that it had helped to heal the wounds of the last conflict, and restored the Commonwealth in strength.

[Lecky, *History of England in the 18th Century*; Robertson, *England under the Hanoverians*; Fitzmaurice, *Life of Shelburne*; Hammond, *Life of Fox*, Holland Rose, *William Pitt and National Revival*; *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*; Veitch, *Genesis of Parliamentary Reform*, Burke, *Speech on Economical Reform*.]

CHAPTER IX

THE BEGINNING OF ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN BRITAIN

IMPORTANT as were the new political movements which we have been surveying, they were not so vital in their ultimate significance as a series of economic developments which were concurrently taking place, almost silently, in Britain. Economic society was beginning to undergo a transformation which, starting in Britain, was in the not distant future to modify profoundly the social and political structure of the whole Western World, and to give birth to the complex problems which engrossed men's attention throughout the nineteenth century, and are still engrossing it to-day. The changes of the period affected both agriculture and manufacturing industry.

§ 1. *Agricultural Progress and Enclosures.*

At the beginning of the eighteenth century British agriculture was less advanced than that of some other countries. It still clung to traditional methods, because these were sufficient to provide an adequate and even a generous sustenance for the population, which grew very slowly; the population of England and Wales was only about 5,000,000 in 1700, and had not risen to more than 6,000,000 by 1750. But during the first half of the century a series of agricultural reformers introduced new and more scientific methods, which promised a rapid increase of production, if only they could be generally applied. Jethro Tull, a gentleman farmer of Berkshire, studied the conditions favourable to plant-life, and invented new modes of drilling and hoeing. Lord Townshend, a Norfolk landowner, worked on the rotation of crops, and showed how a crop of turnips restored the land after a wheat crop, besides providing winter-feed for cattle. Robert Bakewell, a Leicestershire farmer, brought about great improvements in the breed of sheep and cattle. And the example of these

and other pioneers made scientific farming a fashionable hobby during the second half of the century. It was at once interesting, profitable and patriotic. The King himself was a keen farmer ; and rich magnates like the Duke of Bedford and Thomas Coke of Holkham (later Earl of Leicester) threw themselves into the work with immense enthusiasm and admirable results. A school of agricultural writers, among whom the vivid and eager Arthur Young was the most distinguished, helped to spread the gospel of scientific farming ; and the arts of husbandry advanced more rapidly than ever before. Indeed, in this field Britain took the lead of the world.

But the zeal of the agricultural reformers was everywhere checked by one great obstacle—the old-fashioned system of open-field cultivation, which still persisted over more than half of England. Under this system the lands of a township were divided into great arable fields, cultivated according to a fixed rotation, wherein many large or small holders held a number of scattered strips ; while beyond the arable fields stretched an expanse of uncultivated waste, on which all enjoyed fixed rights of pasture. No one was free to cultivate his own land as he thought fit ; all had to follow the same practice ; and a great deal of good land was compulsorily left unused, either as fallow or as waste.

In theory, of course, there was no reason why a township as a whole should not introduce a new rotation, or fresh crops, or improved methods of tillage. In practice it was almost impossible to bring about such a change, because everybody had to agree ; and if it was tried, one obstinate man might ruin everything by insisting upon turning his cattle among the growing corn in a field which by custom ought to be fallow. Lord North tried to get over this difficulty by an Act (1773) empowering a majority to make such changes, but it was of no avail. The only remedy was to sweep away the old system by enclosing the lands—that is, by giving to each holder a solid block equal to his total holding, and letting him do what he liked with it. All the agricultural reformers were enthusiasts for enclosure both of arable fields and of waste lands. They were so keen that they failed to realise one virtue which the old system had possessed : if it penalised enterprise, it encouraged the community-spirit and protected the small man.

Enclosures had been going on quietly for centuries, both enclosures of the arable fields and enclosures of the waste. But they could only be effected by agreement, which it

was often impossible to get. The eighteenth century, in its zeal, adopted another method: enclosure by private Act of Parliament, which overcame all difficulties. During the reign of George III. Enclosure Acts were introduced by scores in every parliamentary session, and they were passed as a matter of course, practically without discussion, because everybody believed that every enclosure of a township meant an increase of the country's prosperity. And, broadly speaking, this was true. As the movement progressed the produce of English soil increased very rapidly, and with it grew the power of the country to maintain a large and industrious population.

But the small man suffered by the change. As Enclosure Acts were nearly always promoted by the large proprietors, the small holders did not always get fair treatment. Even if they did, a little patch of land in full property could not be a real equivalent for the right of pasture on the waste. The cost of fencing the new holdings was often ruinous. And as the small man never had enough capital to be able to employ the new scientific methods, even if he understood them, he was apt to be beaten by the competition of his richer neighbours. The result was that he commonly had to sell his land to the big man, who was always ready to buy; and then he dropped inevitably into the ranks of the landless labourers, working for a wage, or drifted into some town to work at a trade. This process was the inevitable consequence of enclosure. But it only took place gradually, and was not yet very marked during this period. Even at the end of the century, though thousands of Enclosure Acts had been passed, half of the townships of England were still unenclosed.

Thus an agricultural development which in itself was sound and healthy was bringing about great social changes. The big landowners were adding field to field; the small holders were slowly disappearing. English rural society was ceasing to be the homogeneous society, without sharp cleavages between class and class, which in the main it had still been in the middle of the century;¹ a gulf was gradually opening between a mass of landless labourers on the one hand, and on the other a small group of great landowners and a class of capitalist farmers. This gulf was to become very apparent during the next generation. And this meant that the landowning magnates were ceasing to be the natural leaders of a homogeneous society; and the justification for their political predominance was diminishing.

¹ Vol. I. pp. 784 ff.

§ 2. *The Beginning of the Industrial Revolution.*

Meanwhile a still more important change was coming about in some spheres of manufacturing industry. New mechanical devices were being applied to the processes of manufacture. The change was most notable in the cotton industry of Lancashire, which had hitherto been one of the less important of English counties, but was now about to enter upon its career as the greatest industrial centre of England. Lancashire had not yet learnt how to make pure cotton goods; because her spinners could not spin a sufficiently firm thread from the brittle fibre of cotton to make the warp of a durable cloth, and the nimble-fingered Indians still controlled the world's markets in fine cotton goods. But Lancashire had long made mixed stuffs in which a cotton weft was woven upon a linen or woollen warp. These goods were especially used in the tropical trade, for the tropics did not want woollens; and the predominance of Liverpool in the traffic of the West Indies and West Africa was largely due to the near neighbourhood of this Lancashire industry. But the tropical trade had grown so rapidly that it was overtaking the productive power of Lancashire. Lancashire's greatest need was for an increase of cotton yarn. It took five spinners to keep one weaver at work; and this difficulty was felt far more in the cotton trade than in the woollen trade, because cotton could not be spun, as wool was, in almost every rural cottage. The difficulty was overcome by a series of inventions, all due to Lancashire men. James Hargreaves, a Blackburn blacksmith, invented about 1764 the 'spinning-jenny,' which enabled one man or woman to attend to a large number of spindles at once; but the yarn which it produced was too soft to form a warp. Richard Arkwright, a Bolton barber, patented in 1769 the 'water-frame,' which spun (by means of rollers worked by horse-power or water-power) a hard and firm yarn which could be used as a warp. And Samuel Crompton, a Bolton spinner, invented in 1779 a cross between the spinning-jenny and the water-frame which was called the 'mule,' and which produced a yarn firm enough to be used as a warp, and fine enough to be woven into the most delicate fabrics.

The results of these inventions were that Lancashire began to produce fine stuffs of pure cotton which beat the Indian products; and that the weavers obtained a supply of yarn so abundant and so cheap that they were kept fully at work, at greatly increased wages. With its new machines

Lancashire could now pay higher wages, yield immense profits to the organisers of the industry, and still produce cotton stuffs more abundantly and more cheaply than they could be got anywhere else in the world. The import of raw cotton increased fourfold in the fifteen years from 1775 to 1790 ; and the foreign trade of Britain received a stimulus which in itself more than balanced the economic losses caused by the American War.

The new inventions brought about a great change in the organisation of the spinning side of the cotton industry. The machines were costly, and they could be most economically worked in groups, especially when water-power began to be employed. Hence home-spinning rapidly died out ; and factories, owned and worked by substantial capitalists, sprang up in the valleys where water-power was available, while beside them mushroom townlets came into being. The workers in these factories were at first paid very fair wages. But their position had changed. In some ways they were better off ; but they were no longer their own masters, working at their own homes ; they were ' hands,' cogs in a machine. Moreover, much of the work of machine-tending was quite unskilled. It could be done by quite young children ; and the enormity of child-labour in factories came into being.

These new methods of organisation were but beginning in our period. They had almost completely captured the spinning branch of the cotton industry ; they were gradually being introduced into the spinning of wool. But they had not affected the weaving side of the textile trades, save that the weavers were no longer short of yarn, and were enjoying great prosperity. The weavers' turn was soon to come : in 1785 Edmund Cartwright, brother of the parliamentary reformer, invented the power-loom, which promised to bring weaving also under the system of large-scale production in factories. But more than a decade passed before the power-loom began to be at all widely used. Till then, the golden age of the hand-loom weavers continued.

The same years which saw the invention of these textile machines saw also a great advance in the steam-engine, which was soon to be employed for working them. Pumping engines, worked by steam, had been invented by Savory and Newcomen at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century ; but the Newcomen engine was cumbersome, wasteful, and expensive. In 1764 a man of real scientific genius, James Watt of Glasgow, turned

his attention to this problem, and so transformed the steam-engine that it could be used for many purposes. From 1768 the works of Boulton and Watt at Birmingham were supplying on an increasing scale the engines which Watt went on persistently improving. A new and immeasurable power, which was to be the most potent instrument in the shaping of a new civilisation, had been placed at the service of man. Before the French Revolution, indeed, Watt's engines had not begun to be used for any purpose other than the pumping of mines. But they were transforming the conditions of the mining industry, and enabling it to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by other inventions of these remarkable years.

The British iron industries had long been prosperous. But they were being handicapped by the exhaustion of the woods whence the charcoal necessary for smelting the iron was drawn, for no alternative to charcoal had yet been discovered for smelting; and it was only by importing iron from Spain and Sweden that the iron manufactures were kept going. In 1760, however, a new method of smelting iron with coal was for the first time successfully applied at the Carron works in Scotland. This discovery gave a new lease of life to the British iron-fields. It very greatly cheapened the production of iron: the first iron bridge, for example, was built in 1779, across the Severn. And it made available for industrial purposes the enormous wealth of the British coal-fields, hitherto used almost solely for domestic fires. Coal, as the fuel for the steam-engine, and as the foundation of the rapidly expanding iron industries, quickly became the main pillar of a new industrial order. The age of coal, of iron and of steam had begun; and these forces were to transform the conditions of human life. At a stroke these discoveries multiplied many fold the potential wealth of Britain, her power of maintaining an increased population, and the services she could render to the world.

Other inventions contributed. Cort of Gosport invented methods of rolling and 'puddling'; Huntsman of Sheffield found the means of casting hard steel; the catalogue of inventions is endless, and intelligible only to experts. Nor were they limited to the major industries, the textiles and iron and steel. This was a period of very rapid progress in the art of pottery; and new processes, due to many inventive brains, among whom the greatest was Josiah Wedgwood, produced work distinguished by artistic beauty

as well as technical skill. Staffordshire became the centre of the greatest pottery industry in the world.

§ 3. *The Improvement of Communications.*

The new powers of wealth-production with which all these inventions endowed the British people could not be utilised to the full without a great improvement in the means of communication. For coal and raw materials had to be moved about the country on a large scale, the spinners' yarn had to be transferred from the factory to the weavers' homes, the machines themselves had to be transported, the armies of work-people coming into the new industries had to be enabled to travel easily, the food-supplies of the new towns had to be brought in. New problems of transport arose : transport had become the key of progressive industry.

In this first generation of the new era, attention was still concentrated upon the most ancient methods of transport, the road and the waterway. When the period opened Britain was in both of these far behind her chief European rivals, France and Holland. Her roads were inconceivably badly kept, so that travelling was excessively slow, toilsome, and costly ; and the transport of goods had to be carried on chiefly by packhorses, which could not possibly meet the new demands. Britain was poor in natural waterways, especially in the regions of the Midlands and the North where the new industries found their chief centres ; and, apart from a few projects for deepening shallow streams, carried out in the first half of the eighteenth century, she had done nothing to make good her deficiencies.

The badness of the roads was mainly due to the fact that they were under the management of local authorities, which shrank from levying rates. Improvements began with the creation of turnpike trusts, which were authorised to levy tolls from the users of the roads which they maintained. There was a great deal of activity along these lines during this period : no less than 450 Acts of Parliament relating to public roads were passed during the first fourteen years of George III.'s reign. But it was not until the next generation that the great engineers, Telford, Macadam and others, endowed Britain with the best roads in the world.

It was by means of waterways that this generation mainly met its transport problem ; and here its activity was remarkable. In 1759 the Duke of Bridgewater engaged an able, uneducated pioneer, Brindley, to design a canal from

his collieries at Worsley to Manchester. This was the first artificial canal in Britain. It was successful from the first, and was soon extended to the Mersey at Runcorn. How greatly this enterprise contributed to the prosperity of Lancashire (which depended on the import of raw cotton from Liverpool, and the distribution of the finished product by way of Liverpool) may be illustrated by a single figure. It had cost 40s. a ton to transport goods from Manchester to Liverpool by road. Even in the early days it cost 6s. a ton by the Bridgewater Canal.

The success of the Bridgewater Canal led to an immense expenditure of energy in the construction of 'inland navigations'; and gangs of 'navigators' or 'navvies' became for the first time a common feature in England. Within the next fifty years 2600 miles of canals were constructed in England, and some of the biggest projects had been carried out before the French Revolution began. In particular such waterways as the Leeds and Liverpool and the Mersey and Calder Canals opened up the industrial area of the Lancashire and Yorkshire coal-fields, whose development had been checked by the hilly character of the country and the absence of good roads and navigable rivers. Thus alone were rendered possible the rapid concentration of a new population in regions that had hitherto been among the most backward in England, and the extraordinary shifting of the main centres of wealth and population which was one of the outstanding features of the next generation.

It was not merely an economic change that was thus beginning; it was a social revolution. The old, settled, stable order which we described ¹ as existing in Britain in the middle of the eighteenth century was being wholly transformed. The most momentous change in the conditions of human life which history records was fairly afoot; and Britain was the country of its origin. But the full significance of this change was as yet quite unrealised. Securely enthroned, the old governing classes were wholly blind to the forces that were at work beneath their feet, undermining the very foundations of their power, and making it inevitable that sooner or later the political system should be readjusted to accord with the change in the social order. It will be a large part of our business, in later Books, to observe the development of this mighty and silent upheaval.

In the meantime, one comment may be permitted. After the disasters of the American War there were many who

¹ Vol. I. pp. 782 ff.

believed that the days of British greatness were over. What an answer to these vain and shallow prognostications was afforded by the boundless energy and inventiveness which were revealed in the activities we have just summarised ! The days of British greatness were not over : they were about to begin.

[Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce* ; Mantoux, *Révolution Industrielle en Angleterre* ; Prothero, *English Farming, Past and Present* ; Gonner, *Common Land and Inclosure* ; Slater, *English Peasantry and Enclosures* ; Hasbach, *History of the English Agricultural Labourer* ; Daniels, *Early History of the Lancashire Cotton Industry*.]

CHAPTER X

THE MOVEMENT OF IDEAS

§ 1. *Literary Activity.*

It was not only in the field of industry that this age saw the development of new and fertile ideas. Not less important was the activity of the period in all those intellectual pursuits which lead to a better understanding of man's life and of the problems of social organisation.

It was a period of fruitful energy in all the creative arts. In painting it saw the beginning of the great English period, with Reynolds', Gainsborough's, and Romney's lovely renderings of the grace and beauty of English aristocracy, and with Hogarth's rich realism in the portrayal of humbler forms of English life. It was the greatest age of the English theatre, next to that of Shakespeare; for David Garrick and Sarah Siddons were raising the art of acting to its highest level, and Sheridan and Goldsmith were recreating English comedy. In poetry it saw the dawning of a new and great era; the grave beauty of Gray struck a deeper note than the first half of the century had known; Cowper, Crabbe and Goldsmith were suffusing with the glow of poetry the life of common men; the 'enthusiasm of humanity' was taking English poetry into its service.

Perhaps the chief literary distinction of the age was its richness in the Novel, that intimate and adaptable commentary on human life which, more easily than any other literary form, can give to its readers an imaginative realisation of the modes of life, the difficulties, the moral strength and weakness, of their fellows. If a sympathetic understanding of conditions beyond our own experience is the foundation of a healthy social life, then surely the inventors and practitioners of this mode of picturing human life rendered a real service not only to letters but to politics.

The Novel was, in effect, almost invented by the English writers of the generation preceding and the generation succeeding the accession of George III. The work of Richardson and Fielding belongs to the first part of this period; the work of Sterne and of Smollett falls on both sides of the line; the work of Goldsmith and the best work

of Fanny Burney were done in the generation preceding the French Revolution. The great series of imaginative, and for the most part tender and kindly, pictures of the life of ordinary men, which included *Pamela*, *Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy*, *Humphry Clinker*, *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Evelina*, not only added a new glory to English literature, they led their readers to think more humanely and more sympathetically of their fellows. It would have been a strange thing if a generation which read with delight these pictures of the life of their own people had not shown an increased humanity in their social life, and a growing desire to remove the obstacles to good will and happiness. The humanitarian spirit which was one of the glories of this age assuredly drew no small part of its inspiration from the atmosphere of kindness which the great novelists diffused.

§ 2. *Adam Smith, Bentham, and Gibbon.*

Of equal value with the great imaginative works of the time, and of more immediate significance for our study of the growth of organised human fellowship in the British Commonwealth, were the remarkable studies of the working of human society which illustrated this period. By a strange coincidence the year 1776—the year of the Declaration of American Independence—saw the publication of three great books, each, in its own sphere, of epoch-marking significance: Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Jeremy Bentham's *Fragment on Government*, and the first volume of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Adam Smith has been called the 'founder of political economy.' This does not mean that all, or even most, of his ideas were original. He drew much upon his predecessors who had been at work for a century past, and especially upon the French group of economic thinkers who were known as the 'Physiocrats.' But he drew together the scattered and piecemeal speculations of his predecessors, added much of his own, and constructed a coherent and systematic view of the working of society in its economic aspect which definitely formed a new starting-point for all inquiry in this field. The most striking aspect of his doctrine was the principle, which he supported with very cogent argument, that national prosperity is best served when the operation of private enterprise, and the working of natural economic forces, are least interfered with by Government. It was a conclusion which seemed especially

convincing to a generation in which private enterprise was producing the results we have surveyed in the last chapter. One consequence of Adam Smith's teaching was to be, in course of time, of especial importance in influencing the relations between Britain and other countries, and also between the homeland and other members of the Commonwealth. Smith cogently refuted the long-accepted view that one nation could only thrive in trade at the expense of others, and that, therefore, national policy should aim at inflicting the maximum damage upon trading rivals. That had been the dominating idea of Whig trade policy. Smith urged the contrary view—that the more widely prosperity is diffused, the better it is for all nations; that trading exchange is beneficial to both sides; and that therefore a wise policy will, so far as possible, cast down barriers and permit trade to move freely in its natural channels, between nations as well as within their limits. These were revolutionary ideas. They were inconsistent with the continued maintenance of an exclusive trade policy in the government of colonies, which had been the accepted principle of the British Commonwealth ever since 1660; and they therefore prepared the way for the creation of a new colonial system, the character of which was to be due far more to the teachings of Adam Smith than to the lessons learnt from the American struggle.

Jeremy Bentham's *Fragment on Government* does not, in itself, deserve to rank with *The Wealth of Nations*. But it was the first clear exposition of the thought of its author, which was to be developed in a long series of writings, often crabbed and obscure. Bentham's political theories were to have a deep and practical influence, and we shall see more of them in a later chapter.¹ He was the founder of the 'utilitarian' school of philosophy, and the inspirer of the 'philosophic radicals' of the early nineteenth century, whose ideas for two generations deeply affected the policy of British governments. He was the first political thinker to get cleanly away from the idea of a 'social contract,' and the abstract and quasi-legal rights which were supposed to be derived from the contract. With all the barren arguments as to what 'rights' men had in a 'state of nature,' and how far they lost them or qualified them when they passed under the 'social contract,' Bentham had no patience at all; and in this respect he was the scornful critic of Rousseau and the revolutionary thinkers. But he was himself as

¹ See below, Book IX. chap. ii. p. 320.

revolutionary as any of them. For Bentham the one supreme fact was that all men desire happiness, and that this desire is ultimately the motive of all their actions—a disputable conclusion. The creation of happiness must therefore be the purpose for which men set up States; and the aim which every State ought to set before itself must be 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.' This famous phrase, which swept away all theories of abstract rights, all claims to enjoy privileges of class and sect, all traditional obligations, if they did not contribute to the one supreme end, was to have a very potent influence in the coming time. It made its first appearance in the *Fragment on Government*, though its implications were not to be worked out until later. But the queer, shy, pedantic philosopher was busily engaged during the years following 1776 upon the bold attempt to work out a whole system of law and government on the basis of his formula. Few read his works; but some of those who did became powerful advocates of a sweeping transformation of society.

Bentham's greatest weakness was that he spun his theories in the air, without much relation to facts. Like most of his predecessors in the realm of political philosophy, he never learnt to think of human societies as the result of evolution, or realised to how great an extent men's thoughts, and their relations with one another, are determined by the character of the community in which they live, by the modes of life which they have inherited from the past, and to which they cling just because they are used to them. The true corrective to bald and abstract thinking like Bentham's or like Rousseau's is to be found in historical studies; and this generation produced, in Gibbon, one of the few supreme historians, the real founder of modern historical science.

Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* is (apart from the Greek and Latin historians) the one great historical work written before the nineteenth century which is still alive, still a real factor in shaping men's thoughts; and there are few historical books of the nineteenth century as secure of a long future life. The reason for this is not to be found solely in its rich and brocaded style, nor in the wide learning on which it was based, but mainly in the majestic perspective which it gives of the growth, the gradual transformation, and the decay of a great human society. Gibbon makes his reader feel the innumerable factors that have contributed to this mighty process; how ideas and theories have arisen, exercised their influence, and been forgotten; how modes of

life and modes of thought have insensibly undergone profound changes ; and yet how, in all ages, the life of the individual has been shaped and moulded by the character of the society of which he is a member. It is difficult for the thoughtful reader of such a story to think of a human society as something that can be fixed in a final form according to the limited and fragile theories of thinkers whose own very thoughts are shaped by the past and the present of the society in which they live. That is the great contribution of historical studies, worthily pursued, to sound thinking on political questions : and this corrective was never more powerfully given than by Gibbon, nor was it ever more needed than by an age which was full of theories and plans for the reconstruction of human society according to predetermined patterns woven from the brain-stuff of philosophers.

The historical way of thinking was to be one of the moulding factors in the development of human affairs during the nineteenth century. It had already one great exponent in British politics during these years, in Edmund Burke, the deepest mind that has ever devoted itself to politics in the British Commonwealth. The richness and depth of Burke's thought were indeed mainly due to his ever-present sense of the immense influence exercised by the past in the moulding of the future, his conviction of the folly of acting as if there were no past, as if men could start *de novo* in the organisation of their concerns, and his deep belief that every human society is a living and growing thing, not a mere artificial mechanism. But Burke had already illustrated, in his attitude towards parliamentary reform, and was to illustrate more fully in his attitude towards the French Revolution, the danger of an exaggerated reverence for the past. The danger of allowing the past to be a mere incubus upon one's mind is as great as the danger of disregarding it.

§ 3. *The Religious Revival.*

Alongside of this serious work in the realms of political and economic thought, there went a religious revival. Both the Church of England and the Nonconformist Churches felt a new breath of life ; and what is known as the ' Evangelical ' Movement became very powerful, influencing not only the actual work of the Churches, but the whole tone of large sections of society, and producing definite and significant political results. The stimulus of the Evangelical Movement came, no doubt, largely from the Wesleys. But it was in

some ways definitely distinguished from the Wesleyan movement. For one thing, its theology was Calvinist, which Wesley's never was. It was, in truth, largely a revival of the dormant Puritanism of England, a return to the conceptions of the seventeenth century. The movement obtained a very strong hold upon the middle classes, those classes which were playing the main part in the industrial transformation. But it had great influence upon the upper classes also; the King himself was a sincerely religious man, as were many (of the secondary figures at any rate) among the political leaders of the time.

The Evangelicals laid especial stress upon personal salvation, and upon the immediate responsibility of every individual soul to its Maker; and this individualist character of their religious teaching was in accord with the political and economic tendencies of the time. They cared little about the Church as such, its ordinances and its common life. They gave much thought and labour to spreading religious teaching among the masses of the people. But although the equality of all human souls in the sight of God was an essential article of their creed, they were by no means democrats; and though they were philanthropists, few among them thought it their business to take political action for the relief of the growing evils from which the masses of men were suffering. Their message to the poor was too much limited to the preaching of contentment with the lot which God had assigned to them. Let a man be assured of his personal salvation, and he could console himself for the sufferings of this life by the prospect of bliss in the next.

For all that, the Evangelicals, though their view of life was often limited and uninspiring, did much for the elevation of their countrymen. They diffused widely a sense of personal responsibility for the right use of life; they had a high if rather narrow sense of duty; they brought back a genuine religious emotion, a care for things beyond self, into the life of their generation; and the hymns which they composed in very large numbers became an inspiration for generations to come to many thousands of British folk. The poems of this kind composed by the gentle Cowper and by his friend Newton, ex-slave-trader turned parson, became part of the heritage of the British peoples. Moreover, the religious revival of the age gave an immense stimulus to the humanitarian and philanthropic activities which were one of the glories of the age, and which contributed in no small degree to transform the character of the British Common-

wealth. The spirit of men like William Wilberforce, Zachary Macaulay, John Howard and Robert Raikes was a real enrichment of the society to which they belonged.

Because the Evangelical Movement was essentially a revival of Puritanism, it brought about a softening of the bitterness between Anglicans and Nonconformists. This in part contributed to the first step towards a relaxation of the disabilities still imposed upon Nonconformists, which was taken when in 1779 an Act was passed excusing Nonconformist ministers from subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles. That was not a great step, but it was something. And the growing spirit of tolerance extended even to the Roman Catholics, the laws against them being seldom enforced. We have seen the growth of this tolerance in Ireland, and the happy effects which it there produced. In 1778 an Act was passed allowing Roman priests to exercise their office in England, and a corresponding measure was proposed for Scotland. But fanaticism was not yet dead. Riots in Edinburgh and elsewhere in Scotland frightened the Government, and the Scottish Bill was withdrawn. This led to an outbreak of tumult in London also (1780). A monster petition for the repeal of the English Act was presented by Lord George Gordon, backed by a vast 'No Popery' procession, which behaved so insolently that the military had to be called out to protect Parliament. The mob took to burning Catholic chapels. Then the submerged underworld of London seethed up, and for five days the greater part of the city was in their hands. Only the courage of the King put a stop to the disgraceful orgy, and it was not until over 300 rioters had been killed that order was restored.

§ 4. *The Growth of Humanitarian Activity.*

The Gordon Riots showed that toleration is a plant of slow growth. But, what was even more important, they brought home to the minds of comfortable and well-to-do people a vivid glimpse of the terrible underworld upon which their civilisation uneasily rested : a glimpse of misery and ignorance as the sources of brutality. And this revelation (which was reinforced by similar riots, provoked by the distresses of the American War, in other towns) contributed very powerfully to that remarkable outburst of philanthropic and humanitarian activity which began in this period, and which was to be one of the main factors in the making of a new Commonwealth.

Organised charitable work, indeed, on any large scale, began during this period ; though, as we have seen,¹ there had been some movements in this direction in the first half of the century. Hospitals and dispensaries, supported by private benevolence, sprang up in every part of the country. All the Churches undertook charitable activities of various kinds as part of their duty, and it was the steady insistence of the Churches that kept the movement active and growing. There were three aspects of the humanitarian movement that deserve special note.

The first of these was the reform of the prison system, which was inconceivably cruel and harmful. This was the work mainly of one man, John Howard. Being appointed High Sheriff of Bedfordshire in 1773, he made it his business to examine the prisons under his jurisdiction, and was so shocked by what he saw that he proceeded to visit all the prisons of England and of almost every country in Europe. His whole life, till his death in 1790, was devoted to this cause ; and his books, and other methods of advocacy, did much to awaken the public conscience. It is a striking evidence of the temper of the period that Lord North's Parliament very promptly took action to remove the worst of the evils which he had described, and accepted his guidance in the creation of a more humane and enlightened system. There have been few more selfless or beneficent lives than that of John Howard ; and his beneficence extended far beyond his own country, covering the whole of Europe.

The provision of education for the children of the poor was the second distinctive feature of this generation's philanthropic work. Here the leadership fell to Robert Raikes, a Gloucester newspaper proprietor, who in 1780 started a school on Sunday—the only free day—for children engaged in industry, and used all the influence he could wield to get the new idea adopted elsewhere. It was taken up very rapidly by all the Churches, and the conduct of Sunday Schools for children and adults (which were not concentrated upon religious teaching, but mainly instructed their pupils in reading and writing) became an almost essential part of the work of every Church, Anglican, Nonconformist or Roman Catholic. Within a few years some of the Churches began to open schools on week-days also, and during nearly a century the provision of elementary education mainly fell to the religious bodies. If a substantial proportion of the English people were able to read and

¹ Vol. I. p. 704.

write, and therefore to follow with intelligence great political events, during the nineteenth century, the credit mainly belongs to the combined religious and philanthropic movement which began in the generation preceding the French Revolution.

The third great philanthropic movement of this era was the movement for the abolition of the slave-trade. This was indeed a heroic adventure. For it must be remembered that the slave-trade formed an essential element in the most lucrative of all the branches of oversea commerce,¹ and that while every European country had been eager to share in it, Britain had been proud of her success in acquiring the lion's share of the trade. To persuade the nation to abandon in cold blood so vast a source of profit, which hitherto had been universally regarded as legitimate, was no easy undertaking. There can be no clearer indication of the change in the moral outlook of the British people which the religious revival had brought than the fact that such a movement should have been started at all. It began in 1787 with the foundation of a Society for the Abolition of the Slave-trade, whose members were mainly Evangelicals and Quakers. Their accepted leader was William Wilberforce, already active in many good works. It took them twenty years of untiring propaganda to win their way. But twenty years was not a very long time for so great an end; especially as these years were mostly filled by the effort and strain of a gigantic war. The nation which could produce such a movement, and, still more, the nation which could be converted by it to a measure which apparently involved an immense sacrifice at a time of great strain, was obviously not a nation wholly given over to material ends.

The beginning of the attack on the slave-trade marks the emergence of a new attitude towards backward peoples, a new sense of responsibility for their welfare; and the birth and growth of this attitude of mind were among the facts which were to affect the character of the new overseas empire that was, with amazing rapidity, to be created in place of that which had just been lost.

[Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1760-1830*, Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, and *The English Utilitarians* (vol. i., Bentham); S. and R. Wilberforce, *Life of W. Wilberforce*; Lecky, *History of England in the 18th Century*; Mathieson, *England in Transition, 1789-1832*]

¹ Vol. I. pp. 682-3.

CHAPTER XI

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SECOND BRITISH EMPIRE

IN the long history of the British Commonwealth there are few things more impressive than the promptitude with which, immediately after the tragic disruption of the older Commonwealth in 1776, the foundations of a new oversea empire began to be laid. Even in the ten years between the recognition of American independence and the outbreak of the French Revolutionary War great things were achieved in this direction, not of set purpose (for men were beginning to be sceptical as to the value of colonial possessions) but under the mere pressure of events.

§ 1. *The Canadian Group of Colonies.*

When the Peace of Paris transferred the French dominions in North America to the British Crown, there were two distinct groups of settlements, widely different in character, whose needs had to be considered.¹ On the one hand there were the maritime colonies, as yet thinly peopled. These included Newfoundland, the oldest of British oversea settlements, though it had only been finally recognised as British territory in 1713; and Nova Scotia, with its dependencies of Cape Breton Island and Ile de St. Jean (later known as Prince Edward Island), and with an ill-defined claim over the continental region later known as New Brunswick, where settlement had scarcely begun. Nova Scotia had got rid of most of its French inhabitants by the deportation of 1755;² and as there had been a substantial immigration of British settlers since that date, the maritime colonies, though still weak and undeveloped, were predominantly British in character. Nova Scotia had received representative institutions of the familiar colonial type, as a matter of course. In 1769 Prince Edward Island was organised as a separate government, with an assembly of its own, which met for the first time in 1773. Thus, when the conflict with the other colonies broke out, there were already three British

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 57, 6th Edition Plates 78 and 79.

² Vol. I. p. 721.

maritime colonies in the North, which remained loyal throughout the conflict, and formed the nucleus of a new self-governing group.

Far different were the conditions existing in the riverine settlements on the St. Lawrence, with Quebec as their capital. Here the whole population, over 60,000 in number, was French, with the exception of a handful of traders, mainly New Englanders, who established themselves in Quebec and Montreal after the conquest. The French colonists were wholly strange to any ideas of self-government. With the exception of the small ruling classes of seigneurs and priests, they were illiterate peasants or *habitants*, quite unconcerned with politics; and they were to a man devoted Roman Catholics. It was not to be expected that they should feel any loyalty to their conquerors. But what they chiefly feared was the possibility of interference with their religion or with their modes of land-tenure. The problem of government thus presented had no parallel in the earlier history of the Commonwealth.

Until peace was signed, the government naturally lay in the hands of the military. It was exercised with wisdom and moderation. The French inhabitants found that the laws and customs of the country were respected, and that there was no interference with their religion; while compulsory military service and forced labour, which had been features of the French system, came to an end. In 1763 George Grenville's Government issued a proclamation promising the establishment of representative assemblies and the introduction of English law—the normal features of all earlier British colonies. At the same time just treatment of the Indians was required; and it was laid down that private persons must not purchase lands from Indians, who were to sell only to the Crown 'at some public meeting of the said Indians, to be held for that purpose.' This provision was the first sign of a determination on the part of the supreme Government to protect the rights of primitive peoples. It became a standing rule in the administration of Canada, and marks the opening of a new era in the history of the Commonwealth. But it aroused violent protests among those of the American colonists whose dealings it was designed to check.

The other promises of the proclamation of 1763 could not be carried out. The French settlers neither understood nor desired representative institutions; and if the Roman Catholics had been given power by these means, the result

would have been violent indignation among the New Englanders. The handful of Protestant (mainly New England) settlers in Quebec, who numbered less than 300, were loud in their demands for the setting up of a representative system limited to themselves; but this would have been ruinously unjust. As for the introduction of English law, that would cause great confusion in the determination of the rights of the French landowners, while it would have threatened the application of the English laws against Roman Catholics. Evidently the old rules that every British colony should have representative assemblies and be under English law could not safely be applied in the peculiar conditions of Canada. Sir Guy Carleton, the strong and wise Governor who assumed power in 1766, forcibly urged the unwisdom of attempting such measures; and the leading British lawyers took the same view.

The problem was no easy one; and there were ten years of discussion before Lord North's Government found a solution in the Quebec Act of 1774. This Act annulled the earlier proclamation, gave complete freedom to the Roman Catholic religion, allowed tithes to be collected by the priests, and ordained that French law and custom should remain in force in all civil matters. English criminal law, on the other hand, with the jury as an essential part of it, was definitely established. Finally a small Council, to be appointed by the Crown, was empowered to make ordinances; but no ordinances affecting religion or imposing any severe penalties were to come into force without royal consent.

Beyond question the Quebec Act was a wise and statesmanlike solution of the immediate problem, though it could only be a temporary solution. It gave complete security to the French inhabitants, by whom it was received with gratitude. On the other hand, it was violently attacked by the American colonists and by the opposition in the British Parliament. The Colonial Congress, sitting in Philadelphia, passed an address to the British people in which they expressed their 'astonishment that a British Parliament should ever consent to establish in that country a religion that has deluged your island in blood, and dispersed impiety, bigotry, persecution, murder and rebellion through every part of the world.' Five days later, with a view to the coming conflict, Congress addressed a letter to the province of Quebec, in which, after complimenting the Canadians on the 'gallant and glorious resistance' they had offered to the British attack, they urged that liberty of conscience

ought not to be regarded as a consequence of the Quebec Act, because it was the gift of God.

The Quebec Act helped to alienate the American colonists. But its provisions reconciled the Canadians to British rule, while the American protest against it destroyed any chance that they would join hands with the revolting colonists. The priests and the seigneurs became cordial supporters of the British side in the conflict; and the *habitants*, while they refused to enlist in British armies, turned an equally deaf ear to the invitations of the Americans. Their steadiness, and the military skill of Sir Guy Carleton, saved Canada when the Americans attacked it in 1775.

In another way, however, the American Revolution produced a very great change in Canada. As we have seen, there had been many thousands of loyalists in all the revolting colonies. They had suffered during the war; they suffered still more bitterly when it was over, and though the British Government did its best to secure fair treatment for them in the treaty of peace, its efforts were in vain. Life was made so intolerable for them that many thousands of them fled, abandoning their property, to take refuge under the British flag. Some 45,000 betook themselves to Canada, others to the West Indies and to Britain. They were generously treated by the British Government. Each family was given a grant of 200 acres of land, with a promise of as much more for every son when he grew up and for every daughter when she married; provisions, tools, stock and seeds were also supplied to them. The coming of the United Empire Loyalists, as they proudly called themselves, transformed the situation in Canada: taking the Canadian provinces as a whole, they raised the British population to a numerical equality with the French.

The majority of the Loyalists naturally turned at first to the maritime provinces, where British institutions and British laws already existed. They settled in such large numbers in the valley of the St. John River that this region was, as early as 1784, cut off from Nova Scotia and organised as a separate colony under the name of New Brunswick, with a representative system of its own. But many of them found their way into the fertile wilderness north of the Great Lakes, and west of the French district. Here they laid the foundations of a great new colony, in what later became the province of Ontario.

But the coming of the Loyalists changed the whole political outlook in Canada. They were all believers in

self-government, and all accustomed to the practice of it. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick they enjoyed from the first the traditional British methods. It was impossible that the settlers in Ontario should be expected to accept the system established by the Quebec Act, solely with a view to the needs of the French settlers. This was one of the imperial problems with which Pitt had to deal. His solution was found in the Canada Act of 1791.

The Canada Act created two distinct provinces, separated by the river Ottawa: an English province of Upper Canada or Ontario to the west, a French province of Lower Canada or Quebec to the east. Each was endowed with a constitution intended to be 'the very image and transcript of that of Great Britain,' with an elected Legislative Assembly having control over legislation and taxation, and a nominated Legislative Council. Thus within thirty years of its conquest French Canada, which in all its history had never been allowed even the shadow of autonomy, was given a system of self-government on the most ample scale then practised in the world outside the now independent United States; and the French Canadians were assured of the means of preserving their own type of civilisation. Within ten years of the close of the American War a new group of self-governing States, six in number,¹ had been organised on the American continent as members of the British Commonwealth.

Two features of this story deserve comment. The continued loyalty of British statesmanship to the idea of self-government, even after the recent experience of its possible consequences, was a highly remarkable fact. But no less remarkable was the absence of any attempt to force a conquered people into the mould of the conquerors. French Canada was not only left with her own Church and her own laws, but was given power to develop in her own way. The treatment of the Canadian problem showed that in the new era the British Commonwealth was to welcome and encourage widely varying types of civilisation within its hospitable limits, and to abstain from interference with their development.

§ 2. *The Philanthropic Motive in Colonisation.*

We have seen that the provision of 1763 in regard to the acquisition of lands from North American Indians had

¹ Upper Canada, Lower Canada, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

marked the adoption of a new attitude of regard for the rights and claims of primitive peoples. A still more remarkable illustration of the growing strength of this idea was provided in these years by the foundation of the colony of Sierra Leone on the West Coast of Africa.

British settlements on this coast, like those of all other countries, had hitherto been merely factories or trading-stations for the conduct of the slave-trade. In 1787 one Henry Smeathman conceived the generous idea of planting on their native soil a band of freed slaves, who were becoming numerous in London ; and in the following year a strip of land was purchased from a native chief for the purposes of the novel settlement. The enterprise was supported and financed by the Evangelical leaders of the anti-slave-trade movement, Wilberforce, Granville Sharp and their fellows, and in 1791 they obtained a charter of incorporation as the Sierra Leone Company, and organised a new town with the significant name of Freetown. From the first the enterprise was governed by religious and philanthropic motives. It was hoped that it would be the beginning of a free Christian civilisation in Africa. The Evangelical leaders gave much thought and money to it ; and Zachary Macaulay, the historian's father, went out to the pestilent climate to serve as Governor. Unhappily the colony did not thrive. The freed slaves did not know how to use their freedom, and they were a mixed lot of divers races ; moreover the French war brought a good deal of suffering. But the foundation of Sierra Leone deserves emphasis as a sign of the new spirit that was coming into British imperial policy ; a spirit which desired to give freedom rather than slavery to the backward peoples, and to protect them rather than to exploit them. The growth of this conception was to be mainly due to the missionary activity which, in the next generation, became the greatest product of the Evangelical Movement.

§ 3. *Cook's Explorations and the first Settlement in Australia.*

While the American War was raging the greatest of British explorers, Captain Cook, was, under commission from Lord North's ministry, mapping out the whole of the Pacific, and disclosing vast and fertile lands suitable for European settlement which had hitherto been only dimly known, and wholly neglected.

James Cook¹ was the son of a Yorkshire agricultural labourer who, after serving as a shop-boy and a merchant-sailor, joined the Royal Navy and rose from the forecastle to the quarterdeck by sheer merit. Having shown great ability in navigation, in astronomy, and in surveying, he was commissioned in 1768 to lead a scientific expedition to observe the transit of Venus. In this first voyage, two years long (1768-1770), he circumnavigated and charted with care the coast of New Zealand and the east coast of Australia. In two further voyages (1772-1775 and 1776-1779) he completed the exploration of the Australian and New Zealand coasts, mapped out most of the island groups of the Pacific, finally shattered the old theory that there was a great continuous continent at the south of the globe, began the exploration of the Antarctic seas, surveyed the whole western coast of North America as far as the Bering Straits, and finally met his death in the Sandwich Islands, which he had named in honour of the First Lord of the Admiralty in North's ministry. The great explorer had not only made an addition to the world's geographical knowledge unequalled since the days of Columbus and Magellan; he had opened to the abounding energy of his countrymen new fields of enterprise of unsurpassable richness, lands as fertile, and as well suited for the habitation of white men, as America itself. Even in the midst of the strain of the American War British opinion was excited by the new knowledge and the new opportunities thus opened.

Throughout their history the southern American colonies had been used as a place of export for convicts sentenced to transportation. American independence put an end to this, and a new convict settlement had to be found. Botany Bay, of which Cook had given a glowing account, was chosen for the purpose; and in January 1788 Captain Arthur Phillips with the warship *Sirius*, three storeships full of seeds, implements and cattle, and six transports carrying 750 male and female convicts, arrived off the Australian coast, and established a penal settlement at Port Jackson near the modern Sydney. Further contingents of convicts followed; and in 1793, at the very close of our period, the first emigrant ship arrived with free settlers, to whom grants of land were made. The settlement of Australia had fairly begun. But it had begun in very unfavourable circumstances. Though convicts sentenced to

¹ There is a short life of Cook by Sir Walter Besant in the 'English Men of Action' Series.

transportation were not necessarily very desperate criminals, in that period of ferocious laws which imposed the death sentence for such offences as sheep-stealing, yet they were convicts. The establishment of the characteristic institutions of self-government was in these circumstances out of the question; and what was to become a great free commonwealth began with the system of government appropriate for the administration of a gaol.

§ 4. *The New Régime in India.*

In India no less than in Canada the decade preceding the French Revolutionary War saw the establishment of a new order. The genius and steadfast courage of Warren Hastings had laid the foundations of a system of just and efficient government. But he had been hampered by every kind of difficulty; he had never wielded a sufficiently clear authority either within his own province of Bengal, or over the other Presidencies; and he had been subject to a confused and variable authority at home, where the Directors and the Proprietors of the Company were constantly at variance, while the Government exercised no direct control. For these reasons Hastings had never been able fully to carry into effect the great schemes of reform which his insight and knowledge had planned.

The India Act of 1784 had put an end to this division of authority, by making the Governor-General supreme over the lesser Presidencies, and the home Government supreme over the Governor-General. It was now the British State, and no longer merely a trading company, which was responsible for the good government of the British territories in India. The authority of the supreme Government was made more clear when, in 1786, the Governor-Generalship was conferred upon the Earl of Cornwallis,¹ a soldier and publicist of distinction, and a personal friend of Pitt. The prestige of a man of his rank and experience raised him high above the jealousies of the Company's service; while the certainty that he would be supported by Government saved him from constant meddling by the Directors. What might not Hastings have achieved had he been clothed with such prestige!

Cornwallis was able to carry on with ease the work of improving and organising the system of justice and of local

¹ There is a short life of Cornwallis by W. S. Seton-Kerr in the 'Rulers of India' Series.

administration which Hastings had begun. With him the system became clear and definite. Judicial functions were separated from administrative work ; the reorganisation of the Company's service was completed ; and the British power assumed the air of a stable and enduring dominion administered on clear and just principles, and able to inspire confidence and the sense of security ; it was unmistakably the strongest among the Indian Powers.

Two outstanding events especially distinguished the seven years of Cornwallis's Government (1786-1793) ; the final settlement of the land revenue question in Bengal, and the outbreak of a new war with Tipu Sahib of Mysore. Both were the results of principles laid down in the Act of 1784 ; and both served to show how much more soundly and clearly the problems of Indian government had been understood by Hastings than by his critics, who were mainly responsible for the provisions of the Act.

The Act had required that ' permanent rules ' should be laid down for determining the rents and other payments due from landholders in the Company's territories. This had been a subject of controversy between Hastings and his vitriolic critic Francis, who had insisted that the *zemindars*, or hereditary collectors of land revenue, ought to be regarded as landowners, and required to pay only a fixed and unchanging annual sum, in order that they might be encouraged to develop their ' property ' to the maximum extent. It was under the influence of these ideas that Cornwallis carried out, in 1793, a Permanent Settlement of the land revenue of Bengal, which practically turned the *zemindars* into landowners, swept aside the claims of the *ryots* and left them largely at the mercy of their superiors, and at the same time deprived the Government of the prospect of an increased revenue as the cultivation of the land increased. The Permanent Settlement was a gigantic blunder, and a needless departure from the sound traditions of India. Yet it was honestly meant ; it put an end to a long controversy ; and it destroyed the possibility of oppression by Government agents, though at the same time it greatly increased the possibility of oppression by the new class of landlords.

Again, Hastings had always urged that, once established in India, the British power should behave as an Indian power, should establish clearly defined relations with the chief native States and abide faithfully by them, and should strive, by such means, to maintain peace throughout the Indian continent. The Act of 1784, again largely inspired

by Francis, had laid it down as a first principle that there should be no permanent treaties with native States, no guarantees of their possessions—in short, no intervention in Indian politics. Cornwallis did his best to act on these principles. But he found that, instead of being a safeguard for peace, they were actually a fruitful cause of war. The formidable tyrant, Tipu Sahib,¹ whom Hastings had been compelled to fight, was still untamed. He was making alliances with France and with the Sultan of Turkey. He was threatening not only the British power but still more the neighbouring native States. These States appealed to Cornwallis in vain for defensive alliances; the Act constrained him to refuse, though it was plain that an alliance of this kind would be the best way of keeping Tipu quiet. In the end Tipu's deliberate and unprovoked aggression forced on a war, in which Cornwallis, making common cause with the Mahrattas and the Nizam of Hyderabad, overpowered Tipu, captured his capital, and, as the only means of keeping him in check, stripped him of half his territory, the acquisitions being divided between the three partners in the alliance.² Such was the result of the attempt to pursue a policy of non-intervention in Indian politics. It was to produce yet graver consequences after Cornwallis's return to England.

In the meanwhile, despite its defects, the new régime established in 1784 had unquestionably helped forward the purification of the British system, and aided in establishing the British power as a solidly-founded and well-organised dominion, capable of resisting even the tempest that was soon to burst upon it.

Thus, when the long ordeal of the French Revolutionary War began, the British Commonwealth had marvellously recovered from the ruin which seemed to have fallen upon it in 1782. Its domestic discords were healed. Its system of government in the homeland was working efficiently. It was laying the firm foundations of new daughter States, the germs of a new and greater commonwealth. The boundless energy of its people was discovering extraordinary new means of increasing the wealth of nations and the power

¹ There is a short life of Tipu Sahib by L. B. Bowring in the 'Rulers of India' Series.

² See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 61 (c), 6th Edition Plate 65 (c).

of man over nature, and at the same time striking out new ideas in the realms of political and economic thought.

The people which could point, in a single generation, to Warren Hastings, Burke, Pitt and Fox in politics ; Rodney, Hood and Cook for the labours of the seas in war or peace ; Adam Smith, Bentham and Gibbon in the field of political thought ; Watt, Hargreaves and Crompton in practical invention ; Wilberforce, Howard and Raikes in philanthropy ; Bakewell, Coke and Arthur Young in agriculture ; Gray, Cowper and Crabbe in poetry ; Sterne, Goldsmith and Smollett in imaginative literature ; Reynolds, Gainsborough and Hogarth in the fine arts ; and even in the dramatic art David Garrick and Sarah Siddons—such a people had in it an immeasurable potency of future achievement for the enrichment of its own life and the enlargement of civilisation. The British peoples had not reached the end of their greatness, as some prophets thought, in 1782 : they were at the opening of a new era of effort and achievement.

[Grant, *History of Canada* ; Lucas, *Historical Geography of Canada and Historical Geography of West Africa* ; Kingsford, *History of Canada* ; Kitson, *Captain James Cook* ; Muir, *Making of British India* ; Roberts, *Historical Geography of India* ; Seton-Kerr, *Cornwallis* ; Bowring, *Hyder Ali and Tipu Sahib* ; Egerton and Grant, *Constitutional Development in Canada* ; Jenks, *History of the Australasian Colonies*.]

BOOK VIII
REVOLUTION AND WAR: THE GROWTH OF
THE SECOND EMPIRE
(A.D. 1789-1815)

INTRODUCTION

THE period covered by this Book is entirely dominated by the gigantic upheaval of the French Revolution and the long wars to which it gave rise. In these wars Britain was at one time or another engaged not only with the European Powers which accepted the lead of the revolutionary Government in France or of Napoleon, but also with the chief native Powers in India (1798-1805) and with the United States of America (1812-1815). The only Power which never for a moment submitted to French domination, Britain found herself, during four periods, standing alone against a world in arms, and fighting not only for her own national existence, but for the survival of national freedom in Europe.

These long wars established the position of Britain as not merely the first, but practically the only, great naval power in the world. They gave to her an extraordinary control over the world's ocean trade. They immensely accelerated the creation of the new British Empire, which had begun during the previous period. In Canada and Australia this new empire already included two of the great regions suitable for European settlement; the conquest of the Cape of Good Hope added a third. In the West Indies British ascendancy became even more complete than it had been in 1763; and two new continental colonies, British Guiana and British Honduras, were acquired in this region. The needs of naval warfare led to the acquisition of posts of vantage scattered over the seas of the world, some of which were to become links in the new imperial system: Heligoland, Malta, the Ionian Islands, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Penang, Malacca. But the most astonishing achievement of the period was the rapid transformation of the British power in India into the paramount Power over almost the whole of that vast land; and with that may be linked the conquest of Ceylon.

So far as concerned the external structure of power, the wars of the Revolution thus led to a very remarkable expansion of British dominion. But in all other respects

the influence of the Revolution upon the British Commonwealth was wholly disastrous. It killed a promising movement of reconciliation which was at work in Ireland during the years 1783-1795, and led to the tragedy of 1798. It put a stop to the movement for parliamentary reform. It gravely intensified the sufferings which must in any case have resulted from the industrial and agrarian revolutions; while at the same time it not only prevented the adoption of remedial measures, but led to repressive legislation which forbade workpeople to combine for their mutual protection. With a well-meaning desire to alleviate the distresses of the period, a new system of poor relief was wrought out, which had the effect of reducing a large proportion of the population of Britain to a condition of abject dependence and ruined self-respect. The result of this combination of misfortunes was that at the end of the period large sections of the British people had been reduced to a pitiable condition; the widely diffused liberty and well-being which had characterised Britain in 1750 had disappeared; there was real danger of a violent and destructive revolutionary upheaval; and even if that were avoided, it had become obvious that a great work of social and political reconstruction must be undertaken.

Whatever may be the case in other countries, the British Commonwealth owes very little—directly, at all events—to the inspiration of the French Revolution. The revolution brought to Britain not advance but reaction, not amendment but bitter suffering. And when the period of reconstruction began, it was not from the vague and abstract speculations of revolutionary philosophy that guidance was drawn, but from British sources; from the work and schemes of the pre-revolutionary reformers, from the teaching of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, from the practical experiments of trade unionists and co-operators.

CHAPTER I

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

§ 1. *The Causes of the Revolution.*

THE course of human history was now to be deflected by the gigantic upheaval which began with the meeting of the States-General of France on May 4, 1789, and which led to the most wide-ranging and prolonged series of wars that human history had yet witnessed. For the best part of a generation, British affairs were more intimately intertwined with those of Europe than they had ever been before; and the course of events in France as directly concerned the fortunes of the Commonwealth as the course of events in London or in Ireland or in India.

It was a world-revolution which began in May 1789, and not merely a French revolution: a protest against the outworn social order of feudalism, against the privileges of caste, against the political system of despotism and bureaucracy; an assertion of the equal value of all human personalities; a bold attempt to reconstruct human society in accordance with theories of right. This inspiring and heroic enterprise began in France rather than in any other country, because France was the most prosperous and enlightened of the continental States, and the most deeply influenced by vague speculations about a happier social order; while her political system had fallen into decrepitude and had lost the confidence of her people.

Serfdom had more nearly disappeared in France than in any other European country save Britain and Holland; but many vexatious and humiliating feudal usages survived which had long since vanished from Britain. Unlike the peasants of Germany and Hungary, the peasants of France were free enough to have the spirit to resent these evils; and their demand for the destruction of feudal usages was one of the driving forces of the Revolution. Again, France had a larger, a more prosperous and a better-educated middle class than any other European country save Britain

and Holland ; but, unlike the middle class in Britain, they were denied any share in the control of their own affairs, and their enterprise was hampered by irritating bureaucratic regulations, and by an unfair burden of taxation due to the exemptions enjoyed by the privileged classes. It was this dissatisfied and enterprising middle class which was to direct and guide the Revolution. Yet again, France was burdened by large privileged classes, who engrossed a very high proportion of the nation's wealth, but rendered no corresponding services. The nobles, who numbered 170,000, were in the most definite sense an exclusive hereditary caste. They had been stripped by the monarchy of their old political powers, and had become a merely useless and decorative class ; but they had been allowed to retain many of the social and legal powers of feudalism, and they enjoyed the invidious privilege of exemption from the most burdensome taxes. The Church, which owned one-fifth of the land of France and claimed one-tenth of the produce of the rest, jealously preserved its exclusive rights. But most of its wealth was enjoyed by court-haunting prelates, while the parish priests were neglected ; and the Church had almost ceased to perform the function of protecting the weak against abuses of power.¹

Such, in the baldest outline, was the social system—not by any means peculiar to France—which the Revolution was to overthrow : a system of cumbrous, burdensome and antiquated caste privilege, with which every section of French society, even the privileged castes themselves, were deeply dissatisfied. But behind the social system was the political system which supported and maintained it. The despotism which had reached its apogee under Louis XIV. had reduced every factor in the social life of France to dependence upon itself. Its power was irresponsible and unlimited ; it was above the law. But it had not used its power to redress abuses ; it had not even created a single uniform system of law ; it seemed to be the source and buttress of all the evils from which France suffered. Once it had at least given to her military glory and a sense of power, but even that had vanished in the disasters of the Seven Years' War. The bureaucracy by which this despotism was served, though it included many able and honest men, was too omnipotent and irresponsible, and it had been reduced to inefficiency by a maddening elaboration of red tape. In spite of the burden of taxation under which the productive classes groaned, incompetent financial

¹ See the map, Atlas, 6th Edition Plate 60

administration had brought the wealthiest country in Europe to the verge of bankruptcy, and the lavish outlay on the American War of Independence had brought a crisis. Even before the American War the French monarchy had tried to reform itself, calling in the aid of the philosopher, Turgot (1774-1776). But entrenched privilege was too strong for Turgot; and his failure was the final condemnation of the despotic system. The monarchy was discredited, and with it were discredited all the other institutions of the country, which it had reduced to impotence; there was no independent factor in the life of France to which men could look with hope; all were vitiated by the strangling domination of absolutism and bureaucracy. Bad government seemed to be the source of every ill; and hence men were encouraged to believe that the millennium could be readily attained by a simple change of political machinery.

Having no hope in any of the existing institutions of their country, men turned for consolation to the speculations of the philosophers. For two generations France had been the centre of a ferment of political thought, which had prepared the way for a drastic upheaval. We cannot here pause to analyse the acid criticism of Voltaire, which had torn the veil of traditional reverence from every existing institution; or the labours of Diderot and his colleagues on the great Encyclopædia, which had made every problem seem soluble by human reason; or the teachings of Montesquieu, who assumed that liberty was the highest good of human society, and showed in an analysis of British institutions how it could be secured by political devices. The general outcome of this movement of thought was to suggest that wholesale destruction must be the first step towards a better state of things; and that an ideal order of society might be attained by logic, without regard to the deep-rooted habits of life and thought of the people.

But the greatest constructive and inspiring force in the coming revolution was provided by the teachings of Rousseau, or, rather, by the popular interpretation put upon Rousseau's somewhat vague and self-contradictory speculations. What most men drew from his nervous and glowing pages may be summed up in five fallaciously simple propositions: that the miseries of humanity were due to the defects of governments; that the root defect was the denial of individual liberty; that liberty could only be attained through the absolute sovereignty of the whole people; that the will of the sovereign people, the 'general will,' when rightly

declared, could never be mistaken ; and that, therefore, all that was necessary for the restoration of social health was the complete enthronement of democracy, and the sweeping away of every law, custom, or institution which was inconsistent with it. This was not the real teaching of Rousseau, who held that democracy was impossible in a large State. But it was a doctrine capable of arousing an exalted fervour of belief, capable of inspiring men to a great common effort for the realisation of freedom, justice and brotherhood.

Just at the moment when the institutions of France were most discredited, came the American Revolution to give an apparent demonstration that the Rousseau gospel was practicable. The Frenchmen who fought in America saw widely diffused prosperity, and a liberty such as the Old World had never known. What more natural than to attribute these blessings to the successful revolt which had been carried out under the banner of Rousseau's doctrines ? America made the path of revolution seem easy and profitable ; and at the same time it completed the ruin of French finance. The strain of the war brought bankruptcy in sight ; and in 1788 the King of France, after trying many devices, decided to take the nation into counsel, and summoned a meeting of the States-General, which had not met since 1614.

§ 2. *The Rapid Development of the Revolution, 1789-1793.*

In the spring of 1789 all France was astir, preparing for the fullest representation of a nation's manhood which Europe had ever seen ; for the Third Estate was to be elected upon a very democratic basis. All classes, clergy and nobles, townsmen and peasants, were drawing up *cahiers*, or statements of grievances and demands for reform. The grievances covered every aspect of the existing order ; the proposals of reform were mostly vague and theoretical. France presented the spectacle of a great nation dissatisfied with her whole social and political system, full of ardour for change, inspired by a touching faith that a better order could easily be organised, but very hazy about the methods to be adopted.

Nevertheless there was something noble and moving in this great national resolve. For it was all but unanimous. The King himself, many of the nobles, most of the lower and many of the higher clergy, were ready for large changes. Never before had the world seen a great community thus

setting to work to win happiness and justice by a whole-hearted co-operative effort. And when the States-General met in Louis XIV.'s gorgeous palace at Versailles on May 4, 1789, it seemed, not only to Frenchmen, but to generous-hearted men in all the Western countries, that a new era in human history was dawning, an era of freedom, justice, brotherhood and peace. 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was very Heaven': thus the poet Wordsworth recalled the emotion of the time, as he looked back from the dark storms which followed this rosy dawn. Who could have dreamed of the horrors and cruelties that were to come?

From May 4 onwards the days were so crowded with dramatic and tragic events that no bald summary can do any sort of justice to them. We must be content with marking the stages whereby these glowing hopes were transmuted into the horrors of the Reign of Terror and the desolation of universal war.

During the summer of 1789 it still seemed possible that a reconstruction might be effected without violence, by peaceful agreement; and, indeed, the most lasting achievements of the Revolution belonged to these first months, before mob-violence had got the upper hand. The Third Estate, refusing to act as merely one of three Houses, declared itself a National Assembly, invited the other Estates to join it, and swore an oath not to break up until it had made a new constitution. The King yielded, but was persuaded to gather forces wherewith to guard against disorder, and possibly to dominate the Assembly. Thereupon the Paris mob burst its bonds, captured the frowning fortress of the Bastille, and put an end to the possibility of repression.

The fall of the Bastille (July 14) was fixed upon, by the common assent of the civilised world, as marking the definite downfall of the old régime. This was a sound judgment; but the event also marked the ominous beginning of mob-rule. And during the following weeks peasant risings broke out in the East and in the West; chateaux were burnt and the records of feudal services destroyed; while in all the bigger towns autonomous municipalities were set up. France was getting out of hand; and this fact overshadowed the work which the National Assembly was doing, good as in many ways it was. In October the Paris mob boiled out to Versailles, and compelled the weak, well-meaning King to promise that he and the Assembly would take up their quarters in Paris. Hence-

forth they were dominated by the mob, which in its turn was controlled by the orators of the more extreme clubs, windy fanatics who were swayed by gusts of opinion, not by measured and steady thinking. The possibility of reform by calm discussion was at an end; it was with this in mind that in October, 1789 Burke sat down to write the gloomy and accurate prognostications of his *Reflections on the French Revolution*.

The second phase of the Revolution (which overlaps the first) extended from the summer of 1789 to September 1791, and two main series of events distinguished it; on the one hand, the framing of the new constitution, on the other a rapid increase of anarchy in every part of France. The Assembly had begun by drawing up, in noble and inspiring phrases, a Declaration of the Rights of Man; but it had spent six weeks upon this task, while France was falling into chaos. It abolished the worst of the feudal customs, in an emotional session (August 4), in which great nobles vied in the sacrifice of profitable abuses; this was perhaps its most lasting and valuable achievement, and it was this which secured for the Revolution the steady loyalty of the nation. It abolished the old provinces and their varied customs. It broke down the powers of the bureaucracy, and set up in every village, canton and department elected governing bodies, which were mostly filled with inexperienced men whom nobody obeyed. It reorganised the Church by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (1790), which no orthodox Catholic could accept, and thus added religious strife to the other elements of disorder. It vested supreme political authority in a single representative democratic body, and reduced the executive authority of the Crown to a shadow. These and other vast labours of destruction and reconstruction filled two years of incredible industry; and the new system was completed by September 1791.

But it was a system devised by theorists without practical experience, and was unworkable from the beginning. While it was being applied piecemeal, anarchy and confusion grew. The new authorities were not obeyed; they could not even collect the taxes. Discipline broke down in both the army and the navy. The mobs and the clubs were the controlling powers in the towns; and in the countryside peasant risings grew more and more violent. Trade and industry were dislocated. So menacing was this increasing chaos that Mirabeau, the greatest of the early revolutionary statesmen, tried to persuade the King to take a firm stand and rally

the forces of order in defence of a liberal but workable system, even at the cost of bloodshed. But the unhappy King hated the idea of bloodshed; and when Mirabeau died (April 1791) the last chance of vigorous action for the restoration of order vanished. Losing heart, the King and Queen tried to escape to Germany, whither hundreds of noble *émigrés* had been pouring ever since the fall of the Bastille. But the King's flight (June) only had the effect of discrediting the monarchy. He was arrested and brought back to Paris; and it was practically as a prisoner that he gave his assent to the completed constitution in September 1791.

The third phase of the Revolution began with the acceptance of the constitution of 1791, and covered the year from September 1791 to September 1792, during which the new constitution was at work. Many hoped that revolution was now at an end, and that France would be able to settle down. But the Legislative Assembly, elected under the new constitution, was filled with inexperienced and wavering men, and, though most of them were of moderate temper, they were terrorised and dominated by the extremists of the clubs, who had made up their minds to get rid of monarchy. The anarchy of France grew steadily worse; Government, stripped of all effective power, was impotent to maintain order. Many held that the only hope of welding the nation into unity lay in the prospect of a foreign war. Hence the outstanding features of this third phase were the growing violence of the extremists and of the Paris mob, and the steady trend of events towards war.

There was no reason why war should have broken out, if it had not been deliberately invited by the revolutionary leaders. Britain was resolutely bent on peace; so were Holland and Spain. Austria and Prussia were being bombarded by requests for intervention by the *émigrés*, and in August 1791 these Powers had issued a joint manifesto from Pillnitz warning the revolutionary leaders to do no harm to the King. But neither Power desired war: when Louis XVI. accepted the constitution a month after the Pillnitz declaration, this was accepted as satisfactory.

In truth both Austria and Prussia were much more deeply interested in the Polish revolution than in the French. For the Poles, realising their weakness, had revised and strengthened their constitution in 1791; and if the new system had been given time to establish itself, Poland might have been saved from ruin. Russia, under Catherine II., wanted

the new system to fail, because she hoped to devour Poland, and therefore wished to keep it weak ; Austria, under the wise Emperor Leopold, wanted the new system to succeed ; Prussia wavered, but had promised her protection to the Poles. If Austria and Prussia were to go to war with France, Russia was certain to invade Poland : she did so, in fact, the moment war began. And in view of these conditions neither Austria nor Prussia had any desire for war with France : they wished to watch the Polish situation.

Unhappily, the wise Emperor Leopold died in March 1792, and his successor lacked his patience. Three weeks later Louis XVI. had to form a ministry from among the Girondist group, who were bent upon war ; even if Leopold had lived, it is doubtful if he could have resisted the bellicose temper of the Girondist ministers. Nothing can be less true than the often repeated statement that France was gratuitously attacked by the military monarchies of Europe. She deliberately precipitated the war, as a means of consolidating the Revolution.

With their eyes cast over their shoulders at the Russian invasion of Poland, Austria and Prussia made a very half-hearted attack upon France : Prussia, in particular, seized upon a slight check which her army received at Valmy (September 1792) as an excuse for withdrawing, in order that she might share with Russia in the second partition (1793) of Poland,¹ which she had promised to protect. In spite of the hopeless disorganisation of the French armies, they were able to hold their own, and, very soon, to take the offensive and overrun Belgium.

But the mere fact of war changed the political situation in France, and opened the fourth phase of the Revolution. It was used by the extremists as a means of stirring up panic in Paris, and turning the sentiment of the mob against the helpless King. A hideous and cold-blooded massacre of the inmates of the Paris prisons was organised ; and these September Massacres formed the first real indication to the world of the character of the men whom the Revolution had brought to power in Paris. Meanwhile an onslaught on the royal palace of the Tuileries and a massacre of the King's Swiss Guard (August) were followed by the imprisonment of the royal family, the suspension of the royal office, and the election of a new representative assembly, the Convention, to draw up a new constitution. As soon as the Convention met, it declared France a republic (September 21, 1792).

¹ See the map, Atlas, Plate 26 (b).

Even in the Convention, though every possible device had been used by the clubs to influence the elections, there was a majority of moderate-minded men. But they were carried off their feet by the stormy emotions of the time ; and they were dominated, yet more completely than the two earlier assemblies, by the extremists of the clubs and by the city mob.

In the autumn of 1792 the war took an extraordinarily favourable turn for the infant republic. Its ill-equipped and undisciplined armies, welcomed by the disaffected peoples of the provinces nearest to France, overran Belgium, Western Germany as far as the Rhine, and the province of Savoy ; and at the end of 1792 the republic might have been made safe from all attack. But these intoxicating victories carried the republican leaders off their feet. They convinced themselves that the armies of liberty were invincible. In November 1792 they declared war 'against all kings and on behalf of all peoples' ; and, resolving 'to throw a gage at the feet of the tyrants,' they brought the unhappy King Louis XVI. to trial, sentenced him to death, and sent him to the guillotine (January 1793). Between September 1792 and January 1793 Europe had been terribly awakened to the significance of the later developments of the Revolution. The declaration of November 1792, and the execution of Louis XVI., brought all Europe into the war in self-defence. Yet it was France, in the exaltation of her frenzy, that declared war—against Britain and Holland in February 1793, against Spain in March. A world in arms was challenged to crush the republic, or imitate its methods. And with that, the fourth phase of the wild story ends. It had been a story of steadily growing frenzy ; but a yet worse pitch of frenzy was still to be attained.

§ 3. *The Reign of Terror, the War, and the Reaction.*

With the strange vicissitudes of the war thus begun, as it affected the British peoples, we shall have to deal in later chapters. Here we are concerned to note its effect upon the progress of the Revolution in France.

In the spring of 1793 the armies of the republic were driven headlong out of all the provinces they had so easily overrun ; hostile armies crossed the frontiers on every side ; Paris itself was in danger ; and the revolutionary leaders realised for the first time how completely the military system of France had been dislocated by the Revolution. At the same time there was a formidable rebellion at home ;

and the royalist peasants of La Vendée for a time defeated every force sent against them. In Paris fierce controversy raged between the Girondins, who had leanings towards moderation, and the more merciless fanatics who had forced on the execution of the King. The downfall of the republic seemed to be imminent.

But in this perilous crisis the revolutionary leaders acted with extraordinary vigour and resolution. They set up a Committee of Public Safety, which overrode all other authorities and assumed to itself an absolute power more complete than even Louis XIV. had ever wielded. A revolutionary tribunal was created, with summary jurisdiction over all suspected persons, whom it sent in droves to the guillotine; and by its means a Reign of Terror was established which drowned all opposition in blood. Beginning in March 1793, when the Austrians were threatening Paris, it rose in a crescendo of delirium until it reached its climax in July 1794. Not royalists only, but all who dared opposition to the reigning group of fanatics, went to the scaffold: the eloquent Girondins, who had driven France into war, being among the early victims (June). This ferocity raised rebellions in the provinces, at Lyons, at Bordeaux, in Normandy; and the naval arsenal of Toulon even surrendered to the British and Spanish fleets. But the methods of the Terror were unflinchingly applied in the provinces as in Paris; the impotent local authorities were swept aside, and replaced by Commissioners from Paris with absolute powers, some of whom even outdid the ferocity of their frantic chiefs. France was bludgeoned into unity, and risings and disorders were mercilessly repressed.

Meanwhile the manhood of France was called upon to repel her ring of foes; first among European peoples, the free republic established compulsory military service. And among the members of the Committee of Public Safety was found a man of genius, Carnot, the 'organiser of victory,' to hammer the myriads of eager recruits into a conquering army. France became an armed camp. All her resources were turned to war. And her sons, fired at once by revolutionary fervour and the passion of patriotism, achieved miracles of valour and endurance, under the leadership of a series of daring captains, sprung from the ranks of the old army, who wrought out new methods of attack and revolutionised the art of war. The rising of liberated France in 1793, under the unflinching and audacious leadership of the

bloodstained captains of the Terror, is one of the most inspiring events in history. Before the end of the year which had begun so ominously, all the invading armies of France's innumerable enemies had been driven over the borders. During 1794 the exultant armies of the republic were pursuing their beaten foes beyond the frontier; Belgium was reconquered, the Rhine frontier was regained, and before the end of the year Holland was undergoing invasion, and her republican party was preparing to imitate the example of France, and to make alliance with her. The armies of the Revolution appeared to be irresistible; and by 1795 the great coalition of the European Powers had crumbled into fragments.

Meanwhile the Reign of Terror, having served its purpose, had been brought to an end: the ruthless doctrinaire, Robespierre, who had been its figurehead, had followed his victims to the scaffold (July 1794); and the way seemed once more to be open for the creation of a rational system of free government. But the orgy of blood and cruelty through which France had passed had almost destroyed the pure idealism of 1789. The men who had steered a safe course through the delirium of the Terror, and who now took in hand the task of framing a new scheme of government, were no idealists; they were corrupt and self-seeking intriguers. In 1795 they drew up a new constitution, which is known as the Constitution of the Year III.: it abolished the democratic system of 1791, set up a legislative body of two Houses, but vested the reality of power in a Directory of five members, who were endowed with almost all the immense powers of the Committee of Public Safety. What is more, they did not even allow the legislature to be freely elected; but, fearing a nation's vengeance, ordained that all the members of the Convention should be members of the new legislature. So bitterly were the engineers of this new revolution hated that Paris revolted against their rule; and the revolt had to be crushed by military force, under the direction of a rising young soldier, Napoleon Buonaparte.

With the establishment of the Directory in 1795, the purely revolutionary period came to an end. Under the rule of this knot of corrupt politicians France had receded far indeed from the complete democracy of 1791; and their licentious and tyrannical government was a poor fulfilment of the glowing hopes of 1789. The first long step had been taken in that political reaction which was to culminate, five years later, in the military despotism of Napoleon.

What had France gained from all the fury and bloodshed of these years? She had gained the abolition of feudal usages and of caste privileges, and the equality of all citizens before the law; but these things had been already peacefully won in the summer of 1789, with the assent of the King and the nobles; and she might have kept them, and political liberty as well, if she could have avoided the resort to violence. Political liberty, which had been the primary aim of her leaders, France had definitely lost, though it was not yet apparent how completely she had lost it. And in the four dreadful years since 1791, bitternesses had been implanted which were to burden her with a heritage of strife that denied her orderly peace for nearly a century. Such are the results of violent revolution.

But there was one seductive and dangerous compensation which violence had brought in exchange for liberty. France had tasted of military glory—such an intoxicating draught of it as the most splendid despots of her past had never offered to her. She saw before her visions of profitable conquest. The temptation was too strong; and the Revolution which began with the promise of justice, brotherhood and peace, developed into the most terrible menace of tyranny and plunder that Europe had ever known.

[The literature of the French Revolution is so vast that any brief selections from it must be misleading. Holland Rose, *Revolutionary and Napoleonic Era*, and Morse Stephens, *Revolutionary Europe*, are good short text-books. The best modern account in one volume is Madelin's *French Revolution* (Eng. trans.), which is both scholarly and vivid; Aulard's *Political History of the French Revolution* (Eng. trans.) represents a modern scientific treatment with a revolutionary bias; Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, is invaluable for the external history of the Revolution; Carlyle, *French Revolution* (ed. Fletcher or Rose), remains a poetic classic; Michelet's glowing *Histoire de la Révolution Française* (9 vols.), for an enthusiastic view, and Taine's *Origins of Contemporary France* (4 vols., Eng. trans.) for a critical view, are still valuable. See also Fisher's *Revolutionary Tradition in Europe*. S. Herbert's *Fall of Feudalism in France* is a useful summary of recent work on the agrarian side.]

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION IN BRITAIN

§ 1. *The First Effects of the Revolution.*

COMING at a moment when the demand for political reform was already strong, the French Revolution, with its idealist enthusiasm, might have led to a great quickening of political life in Britain. And at first it seemed likely that this would be its result. The great majority of the British peoples, of all classes, watched with warm sympathy the first events of the Revolution. To the young, especially, the glowing hopes of the French, and the noble sentiments of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, had an irresistible appeal. The group of young poets who were soon to lend a new glory to English literature, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Landor, all drew inspiration from the emotion of humanity to which the Revolution gave birth. Burns, the supreme poet of Scotland, the Æolian harp through which the hopes and joys and sorrows of common folk were turned into music, was in the zenith of his powers when the Revolution broke out; and he responded with enthusiasm to the assertion of the equal worth of all honest manhood. In spite of all that afterwards happened, the thrill and the glow of the first three years of hope had a lasting power of inspiration; and in the next generation, when the horrors of the Reign of Terror had been forgotten, it was revived in the work of Shelley and Byron. The Revolution turned the love of liberty from a respectable and tepid emotion into a passion.

Its most immediate and obvious effect was to stimulate the flagging ardour of the parliamentary reformers, whose hopes had been so bitterly disappointed by Pitt. The old societies for the advocacy of reform, such as the Society for Constitutional Information, recommenced their activity, and a host of new societies, having the same ends in view, sprang into being. Two of these deserve mention. The Society of Friends of the People, founded in April 1792, was an aristocratic body of Whigs, who had taken up the cause

of parliamentary reform; one of its first members was Charles Grey, who, forty years later, was, as Prime Minister, to carry the first Reform Act. The London Corresponding Society, on the other hand, was the first democratic propagandist body ever started in England (January 1792). Its initiator, Thomas Hardy, was a shoemaker in Piccadilly; he conceived the idea of enrolling members at a penny weekly subscription; and the number of branches grew with such rapidity that the total membership rose within a few months to something like 10,000. Societies formed in imitation of these sprang into being in almost every considerable town throughout the country; and there was a genuine awakening of popular interest in politics, the like of which Britain had never known before.

These societies early entered into correspondence with the political clubs which were contemporaneously springing up in every part of France, and most notably with the Jacobin Club of Paris. The correspondence began in November 1789, when the London Revolution Society—a body which existed to celebrate the anniversaries of the Revolution of 1688—sent an address of congratulation to the National Assembly. This began a prolific interchange of enthusiastic letters and addresses, in which the Revolution Society at first played the principal part, but in which most of the other societies joined; while French clubs in every part of the country, from Aix to Calais and from Dijon to Bayonne, sent exuberant addresses of comradeship to their British brothers. This correspondence later aroused acute alarm in England; and it was held that the activities of the political societies portended the existence in Britain of a widespread conspiracy for a violent overthrow of the constitution. In reality the whole correspondence, with the exception of one or two indiscreet letters towards its close, was entirely harmless. It came to an end, for the most part, with the September Massacres of 1792. There were, indeed, three or four later addresses of sympathy to the French Convention in the autumn of 1792, protesting against the Austro-Prussian attack upon France; but all correspondence ceased some time before the trial and execution of Louis XVI. One of the last addresses, from the London Corresponding Society, contained an indiscreet phrase to the effect that France was already free, and that Britain was preparing to become so; but apart from this the whole series of letters and addresses contain nothing but exuberant platitudes about liberty, and the coming reign of peace to be

brought about by the friendship of two great peoples. There is not a particle of evidence that any of the societies ever contemplated the use of violence, or desired anything beyond a measure of parliamentary reform ; their minutes are full of expressions of loyalty to the Crown and the constitution, and of condemnations of violence.

§ 2. *Burke, Paine, and the Reaction.*

But while this correspondence with the French societies was going on, a reaction had begun among the mass of the British peoples. It was due to two things : first to the spectacle of the growing anarchy of France, and the growing violence of the Paris mob ; and, secondly, to the profound influence upon men's thoughts exercised by one of the most powerful and momentous pieces of political writing ever issued from the press : *Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution*, which was published at the end of 1790.

Burke had at first felt a good deal of sympathy with the Revolution. But his feeling had begun to change as soon as he saw, in October 1789, that mob-violence was getting the upper hand. He foresaw, with uncanny sureness, the anarchy that was coming, the violence and bloodshed that would follow, the danger to the stability of every organised Government in Europe, the wars and the tumults, the ultimate enthronement of a new military despotism ; and he wrote, with all the passionate splendour of his eloquence, to put his fellow-countrymen on guard against these perils. As was his way, he forgot all restraints, just as he had done in his attack on Hastings. He was grossly unjust to the leaders of the Revolution in its first two years ; he magnified their errors ; he paid no regard to the magnanimity and sincerity of their aims ; he refused to recognise the rottenness of the *ancien régime* in France, and wrote as if France had possessed the most admirable institutions, which needed only reverent repair, not wholesale reconstruction. These exaggerations did not strengthen his case, but gave a handle to his critics, which they knew how to use.

But Burke felt, with a mystical fervour as great as that with which the revolutionary leaders preached the Rights of Man, an aspect of human society to which they were almost wholly blind. He thought of an organised human society, with its laws and institutions, its inherited traditions and outlook upon life, as something organic, something that had grown to its present condition by a slow process

of natural evolution ; and the notion that a thing so marvellous, a living thing that was the product of centuries of thought and effort, could with impunity be carved about and remodelled according to the theories of philosophers, was in his eyes nothing less than a horrible blasphemy. He knew that in any human society men are held together not so much by formal laws as by an infinite number of delicate interlacing filaments of habit and tradition which defy analysis ; to tear these recklessly asunder must lead to the mere dissolution of the organism, or, failing that, to the ruthless employment of force and terror as the only means of avoiding dissolution.

Burke thus gave an emotional and intellectual basis to conservatism. He made it possible for men to feel the same fervour of conviction in defending ancient and venerable institutions that the revolutionaries felt in attacking them. That is why the publication of his book was a great historical event, an event comparable in importance with the fall of the Bastille itself. For Burke's book had an immense circulation, produced an instantaneous effect, and shaped the dominant political thought of Britain for a long time to come.

There were many answers to Burke's great pamphlet ; the British people found themselves engaged in a discussion of some of the deepest questions on which men's minds can be exercised ; and this had its effect in producing the wonderful intellectual fertility which distinguishes the period. Some of these essays, though now forgotten, were able and thought-compelling performances. But the most important of them was contributed by Tom Paine, who had already played a large part in the American Revolution, and who had now thrown himself heart and soul into the more drastic revolution in France. Paine's *Rights of Man*, published in 1791, became, for English readers, the very text-book of the revolutionary creed. Written in a clear and trenchant style, it dealt very effectively with Burke's extravagances ; but Paine was congenitally incapable of appreciating what was greatest in Burke's thought. Paine had, in truth, all the cock-sure shallow omniscience of the revolutionary, who fondly believes that the marvellous structure of human society has no mysteries, but can easily be reconstructed in accordance with formulæ. Throughout his work runs the assumption that while France now possessed a constitution, because she had deliberately set to work and made one, Britain possessed no constitution at all, but only a set of

bad usages inherited from William the Conqueror. The implication was that Britain ought, like France, to sweep aside all existing institutions and start afresh to create a brand-new system, according to the fashionable notions of the moment. It is not surprising that such suggestions should have awakened a profound alarm. Even more potently than Burke's *Reflections*, Paine's *Rights of Man* contributed to hasten reaction, and to bring about a panic-struck policy of repression. And as the reform societies did everything they could to assist the wide distribution of Paine's book, which was circulated by the hundred thousand, these societies, though they had themselves no revolutionary intentions, necessarily became the first objects of these mounting fears.

Two years later (1793) a far more searching and uncompromising book was published by William Godwin, under the title of *Political Justice*. This was, in truth, the pure milk of the word of revolutionary thought. But it was too austere in style to arouse much alarm ; and, as Pitt shrewdly observed, there was very little danger in a three-guinea book.

§ 3. *The Policy of Repression.*

The publication of Burke's *Reflections* was almost immediately followed by a cleavage in the Whig party, and by a painful severance of the long friendship between Burke and Fox. For the generous ardour of Fox's temperament made him an eager sympathiser with the aims of the revolutionaries ; and, though he deplored their later excesses, his sympathies were never wholly alienated. He could not share, or even understand, Burke's profound fears. The younger and more vehement Whigs clave to Fox. Some of them became ardent reformers and members of the Friends of the People, though Fox himself never went so far as this ; and in 1792 Charles Grey introduced a motion in favour of parliamentary reform into the House of Commons ; it was, as a matter of course, rejected by an overwhelming majority. But the bulk of the Whig party followed Burke. The cleavage began as early as 1791. In 1794 the leading Whigs of Burke's section actually joined the Government ; and Fox was left with a mere fragment of a party, which never numbered more than about fifty in the House of Commons. But from the date of this disruption the Whig party, weak as it was, was identified with the ideas of liberalism, and with resistance to the policy of refusing all

change, which now came to be, increasingly, the policy of Pitt and his Tory following.

Meanwhile not the Government only, but the bulk of the nation, had swung round to an attitude of violent hatred of French ideas, and a vehement, exaggerated fear of all reformers. This new temper was first displayed by the masses, and its first expression took the form of mob-tumults in several towns in July 1791, in protest against the intention of the reformers to celebrate the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. At Birmingham a mob sacked the house of Joseph Priestley, the venerable Nonconformist divine, philosopher and man of science, and destroyed his scientific instruments. Henceforward it demanded courage to take part in the meetings of the reforming societies, so great was the violence of the mob in proclaiming their disbelief in mob-violence. In truth, the opinion of the country was overwhelmingly opposed to the Revolution and all its deeds; and the horrors of the September Massacres of 1792, followed by the November declaration of the French Convention, which undertook to aid all peoples in overthrowing all kings, completed the conversion of nearly all those who had hesitated.

Nevertheless Government had convinced itself that there was a real and widespread revolutionary conspiracy in Britain; and it resolved that the conspiracy must be crushed by stern measures. The persecution was fiercest in Scotland. A series of prosecutions for sedition was set on foot, some of which were conducted with inconceivable brutality by Lord Braxfield, whom Stevenson has immortalised in *Weir of Hermiston*. Thomas Muir, a young lawyer of sincerity, moderation and ability, was sentenced to fourteen years' transportation because he had started reform societies and (like Wordsworth) had visited France. Thomas Palmer, a Unitarian minister, who had been a fellow of his college at Cambridge, was sentenced to seven years' transportation for writing an address advocating parliamentary reform, in which it was urged that liberty was decaying in Britain. In spite of these ferocious sentences, the reforming societies had the temerity to hold a 'convention' in Edinburgh at the end of 1793, for the purpose of forwarding parliamentary reform 'by rational and lawful means.' Fifty societies were represented; and the delegates had spent a fortnight in harmless discussions as to the best methods of propaganda, when they were disbanded by the authorities. In January 1794 the leading

delegates were prosecuted for treason or sedition, on the ground that they had established a convention in imitation of France, and were preparing to overthrow the constitution; and William Skirving, Maurice Margarot, and Joseph Gerrald were all sentenced to fourteen years' transportation. These victims were able and honourable men and good citizens. With them was linked Robert Watt, who had made a plot to manufacture some arms and seize Edinburgh Castle. This was the only project of violence ever brought before the courts; and Watt had been a Government spy and *agent provocateur*, in the pay of the Lord Advocate. Panic fear produces strange results. 'We were all mad,' said one of the jurymen, looking back on these events in later years. Long afterwards, in 1844, the martyrs of this madness were commemorated by a monument on the Calton Hill in Edinburgh.

The victims in Scotland were few; but they were enough, in conjunction with the growing hostility of public opinion, to put an end for a time to the open and public organisation of a demand for reform. In England the persecution was less outrageous, because no judge was found to rival the partisanship of Braxfield, and no jury to share the blind panic of the Edinburgh jurymen. A few minor offenders were prosecuted during 1793, some of them being acquitted by the juries, while others were sentenced to short terms of imprisonment or to fines. But in May 1794 Government determined to attack the leaders of the two main societies, the Society for Constitutional Information and the London Corresponding Society. Thomas Hardy, the founder of the Corresponding Society, Horne Tooke, the chief man in the Constitutional Society, and John Thelwall, whom his friend Coleridge described as 'intrepid, eloquent and honest,' together with nine others, were first brought before the Privy Council and then before the Court of King's Bench, to answer for their lives on a charge of high treason. Hardy was tried first; and after all the minutes and publications of the Corresponding Society had been ransacked to disclose anything that could be described as treason, he was acquitted by the jury. Then the doughty old warrior, Horne Tooke, was put on his defence. But in him Government had caught a tartar; for the prisoner actually called Pitt as a witness to prove that the Prime Minister himself had, ten years earlier, said just such things about the need for parliamentary reform as were now being treated as high treason. Horne Tooke also was acquitted; and when the

same verdict was given in the case of Thelwall, Government gave up the attempt, and the other prisoners were discharged. In these trials English juries, surrounded as they were by every sort of prejudice, struck a manly blow for the preservation of English freedom.

The trials of 1794, unsuccessful as they were, ended most of the reform societies, though the London Corresponding Society struggled on, against great difficulties, for a few more years. Having failed in the law courts, Government had recourse to legislation; and in 1795 two Acts were passed, one of which made spoken or written words, even if not followed by action, liable to the penalties of treason, while the second forbade all public meetings unless due notice of them had been given by resident householders. The repression reached its height in 1797 and the following years. In 1799 Acts were passed for the suppression of such of the societies as still existed; and at the same time debating societies were subjected to restrictions, and printers were required to obtain certificates. The law against combinations among workmen, which was passed in 1799, was a part of the same code of repression; we shall have to consider its effects in another place.¹

The story of this repression of free speech and free thought, this panic fear of a revolution of which there was never any danger, forms a dark shadow upon a heroic age. But it is fair to remember that these were years of terrible trial, when the very existence of the nation seemed to be threatened by the militant and merciless republicans; in 1797, when the persecution was most severe, Britain seemed to stand alone in a reeling and ruined world, Ireland was on the verge of open revolt, and the exaggerated fear of internal danger was by no means unnatural in face of the boasts of the French leaders that there were thousands in England ready to rise at a word. Moreover, public opinion was behind the Government; Francis Place, who was a member of the Corresponding Society, testified that 'the mass of the shopkeepers and working people' approved the action of Government, 'such was their terror of the French regicides and democrats.' But there was one group of public men who never failed to protest against the suppression of public liberties, and never lacked the courage to stand up against the overwhelming force of public opinion. These were the Whigs, led by the fearless and generous Charles Fox; and there is nothing in all his career which is more

¹ Below, p. 220.

to his credit than his gallant stand of these years. Nor did the Whig reformers flinch from the cause they had adopted. Even in the dark year 1797, Charles Grey introduced into the House of Commons a bill for the reform of Parliament. And this meant that when the inevitable reaction should come, it would be not merely a revolt of the disfranchised against the privileged, but a demand for national reorganisation that would find leaders among the privileged themselves.

The main immediate result of the French Revolution in Britain was thus to bring to nought a promising movement of political reform, and to diminish the traditional liberty of thought and speech which was the most precious inheritance of the British Commonwealth. But alongside of that it awoke a new fervour which not even official persecution and public misunderstanding could destroy. And it gave to numberless obscure men the chance of proving that they could work for an idea, and suffer injustice in its defence, without ever allowing themselves to be betrayed into violence. The men of the societies, the Muirs and the Gerralds, the Hardys and the Thelwalls, obstinately idealist and not less obstinately moderate, patient under misrepresentation, enduring persecution with dignified courage, deserve a place among the makers of the Commonwealth alongside of the statesmen, the soldiers and the mass of the people who misunderstood and persecuted them, but who also bore themselves manfully in a crisis of their country's fate.

[Veitch, *Genesis of Parliamentary Reform*; Brown, *England and the French Revolution*; Holland Rose, *William Pitt and the Great War*; Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution*; Paine, *Rights of Man*; Hunt, *England from 1760 to 1801*; Hammond, *Life of Fox*; Holland, *Memoirs of the Whig Party*; Morley, *Burke*; Conway, *Life of T. Paine*; Fitzmaurice, *Life of Shelburne*; Cockburn, *Trials for Sedition in Scotland*.]

CHAPTER III

THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WAR

(A D 1793-1801)

§ 1. *The Fulfillment of the First Coalition, 1793-1795.*

It was with extreme reluctance that Pitt allowed Britain to be drawn into the war against the French Revolution. So obstinately did he believe in the possibility of maintaining peace that he had actually reduced the military and naval estimates as late as 1792; the number of men in the navy had been cut down from 34,000 to 16,000. But the revolutionary leaders themselves forced his hand. In the autumn of 1792, having overrun Belgium, they declared the river Scheldt open to trade in defiance of treaties to which both France and Britain were pledged, and sent ships of war to Antwerp by that route. Then, though Holland had remained neutral by Pitt's advice, they threatened to invade and conquer that country. To all this was added the alarm caused by the proclamation of November 1792, threatening war against all kings, and finally, in January 1793, came the execution of Louis XVI., which set even the city crowds clamouring for war against France. Even then, though the French ambassador was expelled, and war had become inevitable, Pitt still hesitated to take the plunge, and it was France which declared war, in February 1793.

Pitt had hesitated because he hated war; and, as he was soon to show, he had not a vestige of his father's commanding genius in the conduct of it. He made every possible miscalculation. He thought the war would be over in a couple of campaigns, whereas it was to last for twenty-two years. He showed no sort of capacity to play the part which Marlborough had played in the war of the Spanish Succession—the part of co-ordinating the efforts of the allies, which Britain's position as pay-mistress might have enabled her to do. Nor did he succeed in discovering any soldier or diplomat who could play it for him. He had nothing of

his father's judgment of men. The leaders whom he chose for the British armies in the field were uniformly incompetent. Even the high naval commands were, until 1795, mostly bestowed upon second-rate men like Bridport, Hotham, and Colpoys, though admirals like Howe, Hood, and Duncan were available. Pitt was still less successful in the choice of the men whom he placed at the head of the fighting departments of Government. The Admiralty was at first under the control of his incompetent elder brother, the Earl of Chatham; and it was not until the junction of Burke's followers with the Government in 1794 that naval policy was brought under vigorous direction, with the accession of Earl Spencer to the Admiralty.

When the war began, the army and navy were anything but ready for their task; they had been starved and neglected during the years of peace. The army numbered only 17,000 men; and although these numbers were, of course, rapidly increased, no systematic method of recruitment or organisation was ever wrought out so long as Pitt remained in power. The navy also had been neglected. The men were badly paid, badly fed, recruited largely by the brutal methods of the pressgang, and often treated with an abominable severity. Many of the ships were in bad condition, and only ninety ships of the line were ready to be commissioned when the war began. If the French navy had not been in a terrible state of indiscipline and disorganisation, British supremacy on the seas might have been endangered during the first years.

Even in the sphere of finance, upon which he most prided himself, Pitt's good genius deserted him as soon as he came under the shadow of war. He financed the war from the first mainly by means of loans, instead of raising as much as possible in the form of taxation; and the result was that, before the war ended, the nation was paying in interest on these loans every year as much as would have defrayed the annual outlay at the beginning, and it was saddled with this burden for an indefinite period. But Pitt's failure as a war minister was in nothing so clearly displayed as in his failure to form and to carry out a consistent and coherent plan of campaign. What soldiers call the 'higher direction,' the general-staff work of the war, was on the British side inconceivably inefficient.

The foundation of British war policy ought to have been the efficient use of the power of the navy. No attempt was made to use the overwhelming preponderance of naval

power which the allies enjoyed at the beginning of the war. More extraordinary still, the son of Chatham neglected to blockade the French ports. There was only one great naval battle during the first four years of the war ; and it ought to have been unnecessary. The main French fleet had come out from Brest (May 1794) to meet and protect a big squadron of corn-ships coming under convoy from America. Lord Howe, with the British Channel fleet, intercepted the French fleet on June 1, 1794, and defeated it in a well-fought battle, which came to be known as the Glorious First of June. But while the battle was raging the corn-ships got safely into harbour, so that the main purpose of the battle was not achieved. If the French squadrons had been sealed up in port by a strict blockade, either the corn-ships would never have sailed, or they would have been intercepted. Thus the chief naval exploit of these years was really the proof of a failure in naval policy.

Again, being in command of the sea, it should have been easy for Britain to give aid to the rebels in France. Two outstanding opportunities for such action presented themselves. One was the revolt of the naval arsenal of Toulon, which in August 1793 admitted the British and Spanish fleets. But no adequate precautions were taken to defend this vitally important place. It was attacked and captured by a revolutionary army, in which Napoleon, commanding the French artillery, won his earliest fame ; and the Anglo-Spanish forces did not even destroy all the French warships in the harbour before withdrawing. A second opportunity was offered by the revolt of La Vendée, which, being on the coast of the Bay of Biscay, could easily have been succoured from the sea. The Vendéans fought with extraordinary gallantry. But no aid was sent to them till the end of 1793 ; and it arrived only to find that the Vendéans had been defeated, and ignominiously returned home without doing anything.

Even more humiliating was the management of the main campaign on land. At the beginning of the campaign of 1793 the allies rapidly drove the French out of Belgium ; and when the British forces, under the King's son, the Duke of York, entered the field, it only remained to capture the border fortresses, and a clear road would be open to Paris. One after another the fortresses fell. But instead of driving home their success, the allies began to squabble among themselves. York, under the orders of the home Government, withdrew from the main Austrian force under Coburg,

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in order to lay siege to Dunkirk. Meanwhile the panic of defeat had aroused the French people, and the genius of Carnot had recreated their armies. In September York was severely defeated at Hondschoote, and forced to raise the siege of Dunkirk; he only saved himself by a hasty retreat. A month later the turning-point battle of Wattignies drove back Coburg's main army, and France was saved from invasion. By the end of 1793 the tide had definitely turned; the internal troubles of France had been overcome; the armies of the republic were already pressing over the frontier in every direction.

In the campaign of 1794, French armies, fighting with irresistible *elan*, drove the allies out of Belgium. Coburg and his Austrians were driven across the Rhine. The British army fell back upon Holland. But it was promptly followed by the French, who, in alliance with the Dutch republicans, overran the whole country; the French cavalry actually captured the Dutch fleet by riding across the frozen sea; and the British force, after terrible sufferings, succeeded only in retreating into Germany, whence it was withdrawn by way of Bremen.

This was an ignominious conclusion for two years' fighting by the greatest coalition of European States that had ever been formed. Meanwhile the Reign of Terror had been brought to an end; and the new Government of France, though it was corrupt and ambitious of conquest, had abandoned the idea of waging endless war for the republican idea. The result of these events was a rapid dissolution of the great coalition of 1793. Holland had become a subject ally of France, and declared war against Britain in 1795. Prussia, eager to devote her strength to the acquisition of territory in Poland, made haste to withdraw from the war, and in April 1795 concluded an ignominious peace at Basle, recognising the French claim to the Rhine frontier; in the same year she joined with Russia and Austria in the third partition of Poland, which wiped that unhappy nation off the map of Europe.¹ Spain concluded, in July 1795 a treaty of peace with France, which was to be turned in the next year into an offensive and defensive alliance aimed at Britain. These secessions broke the back of the great coalition. There were now left only Austria, the Italian Powers, and Portugal; but among these only Austria and Sardinia counted for anything as military Powers, and both were almost exhausted.

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 26 (b), 6th Edition Plates 57 and 68 (c).

Even in Britain itself there was an insistent demand for peace. Despite the opposition of Burke and other unbending foes of the Revolution, Pitt resolved to make an attempt at a settlement. He proposed to Austria a scheme for the general pacification of Europe, and Austria was not unwilling; he also opened direct negotiations with France. But the French Government refused to make terms. They were bent upon further conquests. Their recent victories had been turned to advantage by the plunder of the conquered countries, and, as the industrial life of France had been gravely dislocated, they dared not abandon the lucrative trade of war. So Pitt's overtures were rejected. The chance of a general peace, which was within reach in 1796, was sacrificed to the new ambitions of the republican Government; and the civilised world was sentenced to a terrible prolongation of conflict.

§ 2. *The Dark Years, 1795-1798.*

From 1795 onwards, the war took on a new character. The Revolution was now securely established. France no longer entertained the aim of overthrowing monarchy everywhere in favour of democracy. Though her politicians and her soldiers still used the language of liberty, it was no longer the ambition of extending the range of freedom, but the ambitions of conquest and of glory, that moved them. On the other hand, the remaining enemies of France no longer hoped to overthrow the Revolution. They had not, indeed, lost their fear and hatred of it: an era of panic-struck repression had begun, in almost every European country, which was to last for two generations. But while the rulers of Europe strove to crush out revolutionary ideas in their own dominions, they no longer dreamed of crushing them in France. They were willing, even eager, to make peace with the terrible republic. But the republic, intoxicated with victory, made peace with some, but only in order to concentrate her resources for a war of conquest against the others. And these others—Britain, Austria, and the Italian States—knew that they had to defend their very existence against a terrible menace.

Britain, in particular, realised that she must fight for her very life; and during the next three years, 1795-1798, she passed through the most anxious moments of her long history. Twice in 1796, and once in 1797, Pitt brought himself to sue for peace, offering, on the last occasion, to

restore all the lands that had been conquered from France in the West Indies,¹ and to recognise the republic's continental conquests. His overtures were always refused. They were refused because France's appetite for conquest was fed by an intoxicating series of victories, and because there had flamed into her sky the most marvellous military genius of all history; for these were the years of the emergence of Napoleon Buonaparte. And as the nature of the danger was realised in Britain, the temper with which she faced the ordeal of war was changed. At first she had been somewhat half-hearted, finding herself in the unwonted position of fighting against a people who were struggling (with whatever extravagances) to attain freedom. But as the character of the struggle became more clear, as the dread figure of Napoleon, like the genie in the Arabian tale, swelled and grew till its shadow seemed to blot out the sun, the temper of the nation became more set. It was not merely the repressive policy of government, but the growing dread of the French menace, which brought about a rapid decline in the vigour of the reform movement in Britain after 1794; and even the poets began to waver in the fervour of their devotion to the gospel of Liberty.

In the campaign of 1795, which followed the break-up of the coalition, there were no very decisive events. Pitt tried the experiment of landing a large force of *émigrés* in Brittany, where there had been royalist risings. But the expedition came too late; it was a humiliating fiasco; and this was for some years the last British attempt to do anything on the continent. The fighting on land was left to Austria and Sardinia. And though they had the worst of the fighting on the Alpine frontier of Italy, there was still good reason to hope, when the year ended, that they would be able to hold their own.

For the year 1796, however, the French Government had planned a vigorous series of attacks against both of France's principal enemies. An intensive campaign against British merchant shipping was carried on with alarming success by warships and privateers; and a formidable army was placed under the command of Lazare Hoche, the ablest of the republican generals, for an invasion of Ireland. The incompetent handling of the Channel fleet allowed this force to set forth, and even to reach Ireland unattacked (December 1796).² It was by luck, rather than by skill, that Britain was saved on this occasion from a very terrible disaster. In February 1797 a small French force was

¹ See below, Chap. iv. pp. 187-189.

² See below, p. 208.

actually landed in South Wales ; and though it was easily overwhelmed, the mere fact that it was able to land was an ominous beginning for what was to be a year of dread. When the navy failed to check invasion, men might well fear what was to come.

But the main French attacks of 1796 were aimed against Austria ; Britain's turn was to come later. Two great armies were to march across Southern Germany, the one by the Main Valley, the other by the Danube Valley ; and a third army was, meanwhile, to invade Northern Italy, and strike at the Austrian power there. The command of the Italian army was given to Napoleon Buonaparte, a young Corsican of twenty-seven. It was his first important command, though he had done well as an artillery officer at Toulon and on the Italian frontier, and had won the favour of the Directors by the skill with which he had suppressed the revolt of Paris in 1795. The arrival of Napoleon at Nice, in March 1796, to take command of the army of Italy marks the beginning of a new era in the war. By a strange coincidence, in the British fleet, which was hanging off the coast of the Riviera and striving to hamper the movements of the French armies, there was a young post-captain, chafing at the inactivity of his chiefs : Nelson, the supreme genius of sea warfare, appears at the very opening of the new era over against Napoleon, whom he was to baffle time and again during the next ten years.

The Italian campaign of 1796, which was the foundation of Napoleon's extraordinary career, was dazzling in its rapidity and brilliance. The young general first isolated the Sardinians, and forced them to make peace ; then, driving the Austrians before him, he overran the rich plain of Lombardy, and turned it into a republic in dependent alliance with France. The minor States of Italy were compelled to make peace and to close their ports to British ships. And these dazzling achievements helped to persuade Spain to make an alliance with France, and to declare war against Britain (October). In these circumstances the British fleet could no longer maintain itself in the Mediterranean : it evacuated that sea (November), which for eighteen months remained closed to British shipping. The evacuation of the Mediterranean marked almost the lowest ebb of British fortunes during the war.

At the end of 1796 it was already evident that Austria was beaten. In the spring of 1797, after defeating new Austrian armies, Napoleon boldly struck towards Vienna,

and had got within one hundred miles of the city when the Austrian Government accepted at Leoben the terms of a humiliating peace, which was later embodied in the Treaty of Campo Formio. Austria recognised all the French conquests, and left France practically mistress of Italy, receiving in return most of the territories of the republic of Venice. When the French Government thus cynically assented to the suppression of an ancient free State, it was guilty of a crime comparable with the partition of Poland ; and nothing could have demonstrated more clearly how completely the rulers of France were now dominated by the spirit of conquest.

The downfall of Austria meant that Britain was left to stand alone against a militant French power infinitely more formidable than that of Louis XIV. had ever been. France not only had great armies inspired by the confidence of victory and led by commanders of genius ; she had annexed Belgium and Western Germany ; she had turned Holland and Northern Italy into dependent States ; she controlled the Mediterranean ; she had a close alliance with Spain ; and there was no Power on the continent of Europe prepared to enter the field against her. Against this terrible Power Britain could strike no effective blow. Even the shield of the navy, her only defence, seemed no longer sure. It had not availed to prevent two French expeditions in the winter of 1796-7. Another and greater force for the invasion of the islands, consisting of the unconquered veterans of the revolutionary wars, was now preparing. There was no force in Britain capable of resisting a French army, if once it could be safely ferried over. Still less would it be possible to defend Ireland, which was on the verge of rebellion, with 200,000 men secretly drilling. The most perturbing fact of all was that France could now dispose not only of her own fleets, but of the fleets of Holland and Spain. Taken in combination they materially outnumbered the British navy. If they could join forces, they must almost infallibly obtain command of the Channel, and the doom of Britain would be sealed. To bring about such a combination was the aim of French policy during 1797.

Everything depended upon the navy. Happily, at this moment of crisis, the supreme naval genius of Nelson ¹ at last got its chance. Nelson was serving as second-in-command of a squadron of fifteen ships under Sir John

¹ Southey's *Life of Nelson* is a classic. Sir J. K. Laughton's *Nelson* in the 'English Men of Action' Series is an admirable short study.

Jervis, which had been engaged, since the evacuation of the Mediterranean, in watching the outlet of that sea. In February 1797 the Mediterranean fleet of Spain came out through the Straits; this was the first step towards the great combination. The Spaniards had twenty-five battleships. But at Cape St. Vincent Jervis came up with them, and without hesitation threw his fifteen ships at the enemy, breaking through a gap in the Spanish line, and then veering round to concentrate on the main body. The manœuvre would have been fruitless if Nelson, who was in command of the British rear, had not disregarded orders and thrown himself at the head of the Spanish line, thus preventing its escape. Four ships were captured. The rest tamely withdrew into Cadiz harbour, where Jervis kept them under strict blockade. This victory not only raised the spirits of the British peoples; it prevented the junction of the Spanish fleet with the French; and, what was even more important, it disclosed the genius and courage of Nelson.

But the danger was by no means averted by the victory of Cape St. Vincent. There was a strong Dutch fleet in the Texel, at the mouth of the Zuyder Zee, and a French fleet at Brest.¹ And the main French plan for the year was that the Dutch fleet should convey an army to Ireland, and be followed by the Brest fleet with Lazare Hoche and a second army. Admiral Duncan, with the North Sea fleet, was watching the Dutch; Lord Bridport, with the Channel fleet, was keeping guard over Brest. The safety of Britain depended upon these two fleets. And at this awful moment both mutinied.

The seamen had good ground for discontent. They were badly paid, badly tended, and often treated with inconceivable brutality. In the Channel fleet at Spithead, where the mutiny first broke out in April, they put forward reasonable demands, and behaved themselves in an orderly way. The Admiralty gave way to their demands, but not without futile delays and evasions, which prolonged the mutiny for over three weeks. It was no sooner ended than a new mutiny broke out in the North Sea fleet at the Nore. This was a much graver affair than the mutiny at Spithead. The reasonable demands of the sailors had already been conceded; yet the men at the Nore, led by an ex-midshipman, Parker, actually blockaded the mouth of the Thames, and Sheerness had to be fortified against them. Government rightly refused to consider demands put forward in such

¹ See the map of the Narrow Seas, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 45, 6th Edition Plate 62.

a way, and, after an anxious month, the men returned shamefacedly to their duty. Eighteen of the ringleaders were hanged; the rest were pardoned, after the mutinous fleet had won one of the most glorious of British naval victories.

Britain has never lived through a more anxious time than the two months covered by these successive mutinies. It was only by sheer luck that the Dutch and French fleets made no use of the opportunity thus offered to them. And, meanwhile, out in the North Sea, Duncan, off the Texel, had been deserted by all but two of his ships. With a splendid bravado he kept up the semblance of a blockade, sending signals from one of his ships to the other, as if to be transmitted to an invisible squadron below the horizon; and he had arranged, if the worst should come and the Dutch should set sail, to sink both of his vessels in the fairway so as to impede navigation. Happily westerly winds kept the Dutch penned into harbour. It was not till October that they came forth; and by that time the fleet had returned to its duty, and the men were determined to prove their patriotism. They did so nobly, in the hard-fought battle of Camperdown, when Duncan cut the Dutch line in two places, captured nine ships, and drove the shattered remnant back into the Texel, whence it never emerged again.

The victory of Camperdown was of incalculable importance. Taken in conjunction with Cape St. Vincent it destroyed the possibility of an overwhelming enemy combination, and securely re-established British naval supremacy. From this date onwards the British navy held the upper hand, and kept the scattered fleets of the enemy penned into harbour.

§ 3. *First Phase of the Duel between Napoleon and Nelson.*

The naval checks of 1797 did not put an end to the project of an invasion of Britain, which seemed to be the only way of overthrowing the one undefeated enemy of France. Even after Camperdown, boats were still being built in the Channel ports, and armies organised on the French side of the Straits. To command the army of England the Directors had fixed upon Napoleon, who returned from his dazzling triumphs in Italy at the end of 1797. But a very brief survey of the situation satisfied Napoleon that there was no prospect of success for an invasion until the French fleet had been reorganised and strengthened. Instead, he urged that the best way to strike at Britain was

to attack the foundations of British oversea trade, and that this could best be done by seizing Egypt. 'The power that holds Egypt is ultimately the master of India,' was one of Napoleon's axioms. Thankful to get the too popular young general out of the way, and hoping for rich plunder from the East wherewith to repair their shattered finances, the Directors accepted the project; and in May 1798 an army of 35,000 soldiers, escorted by the French Mediterranean fleet, set sail from Toulon.

This was a pure filibustering expedition. Its first exploit (June) was to seize and garrison the island of Malta, though France had no quarrel with the Knights of St. John, who had held the island since the sixteenth century. Then the army was landed in Egypt, though France had no quarrel with the Sultan of Turkey, who was the suzerain of Egypt, or with the Mamelukes (mercenary soldiers), who were its effective masters. Alexandria was occupied; the Mamelukes were easily defeated in the neighbourhood of Cairo (July); and Napoleon set to work to organise his conquest. He had conceived mighty projects. He was to make a canal across the isthmus; he was to get control of the Red Sea; he was to prepare the way for a future attack on India. But before he had even fully secured his hold on Cairo, he received startling news, which altered the whole complexion of the great adventure. His communications with France had been cut.

After the naval victories of the previous year, the British Government had decided to send a strong squadron once more into the Mediterranean. To the command of this squadron—which was slightly weaker, on paper, than the French Mediterranean fleet—Nelson was appointed. It was his first important independent command. And thus the supreme genius of sea warfare entered upon his long duel with the supreme genius of land warfare. Nelson entered the Mediterranean before the French expedition sailed from Toulon. But bad luck and the lack of scouting frigates prevented him from intercepting it. Ignorant of its destination, he went off on a wild-goose chase, first to Sicily and then to the Levant. Twice over, in this eager hunt, he missed the French fleet by a hair's-breadth. But the French army had been safely landed, and was at Cairo, before Nelson learned what had happened. Then he came swiftly down upon the French fleet, which lay at anchor in the Bay of Aboukir (August 1)¹. Sailing boldly into the

¹ For a plan of this battle, see Atlas, 5th Edition, *Introd.*, p. 48.

bay, he concentrated the whole strength of his fleet upon the van of the anchored French line, destroyed it, and passed on to the rear. Never, in all the records of naval warfare, had any fleet suffered such utter destruction ; it was not defeat, but annihilation. Only two of the French battleships and one frigate escaped ; and the two battleships were subsequently captured.

The battle of the Nile established British naval supremacy in the Mediterranean ; and the island of Malta, which was reduced after a long siege, became the principal naval base by means of which this supremacy was maintained. It also helped to bring about a new coalition against France, and thus to rescue Britain from her dangerous isolation. In the meanwhile it had locked up Napoleon and his army in Egypt with no chance of escape, and given to the young conqueror his first lesson on the formidable character of sea-power.

Imprisoned in Egypt, Napoleon found little opportunity for his restless energy. Nothing could be done against India without a fleet. Moreover, the raid into Egypt had inevitably roused the Turks. In order to forestall a Turkish attack, Napoleon undertook the conquest of Palestine with a part of his army. But, once again, the British navy checked him. Sir Sidney Smith, who had been left by Nelson with a small squadron to police the Eastern Mediterranean, threw into Acre a force of sailors and marines to stiffen the resistance of the Turkish garrison, and at the same time supported them by the fire of his ships from the sea, and captured the vessels that were bringing the siege guns with which Napoleon hoped to reduce the fortress. The conqueror had to fall back, baffled, and only with the greatest difficulty returned to Egypt (May 1799). Soon after his return he had to deal with a considerable Turkish army brought by sea for the reconquest of Egypt (July 1799). He inflicted upon it at Aboukir a crushing defeat, and for the moment secured his hold upon his conquest. But his position was unsafe, and he was reduced to impotence. Sea-power had baffled him. Meanwhile, news came of great events in Europe ; and, chafing at being thus penned up far from the scene of action, he slipped away (August), leaving the army behind him, and landed on the coast of France in October 1799, to open a new chapter in his marvellous career.

He was able to boast that he had made a romantic conquest, and he brought with him the halo of his final victory over the Turks. But he had left a fine army im-

prisoned and without the means of escape. In 1801 Britain, in conjunction with the Turks, organised a triple attack upon the dwindling French army in Egypt. While Sir David Baird, with a force from India, landed on the Red Sea Coast and advanced across the desert towards Cairo, and while the Turks invaded from the North-east, General Abercromby landed with a British army in Aboukir Bay and won a victory which sealed the fate of the French army of occupation. The great expedition to Egypt had ended in unrelieved disaster. It was the first complete and irremediable failure to which the French had been forced to submit since the victories of 1793; and the cause of it was British sea-power, now at last being wielded with energy and vision.

§ 4. *The Second Coalition and the Peace of Amiens.*

While Napoleon was engaged upon the Egyptian adventure, the government of the Directory, corrupt, inefficient and almost bankrupt, was earning the hatred of France; and beyond the borders of France its aggressive and tyrannical policy was alarming Europe, and making possible the formation of a new coalition. French armies had come as liberators into Belgium, into Western Germany, into Italy; but they behaved as tyrants, exacting an extortionate tribute of money and valuables to relieve the distresses of the Paris treasury. The dependent republics which they established found that they were allowed no freedom, but were treated as conquered subjects. And during 1798 the French Government carried out a series of insolent aggressions which showed that there was no hope of stable peace with the militarist republic. Switzerland was occupied without a shadow of justification, was plundered to the extent of 23,000,000 francs, and had to accept a dictated constitution on the French model in subordination to France. French troops entered Rome, and, after heaping indignities upon the aged Pope, set up a Roman Republic and plundered the city of its treasures. The King of Naples, encouraged by Nelson's victory, attacked the Roman Republic with momentary success; but the French armies closed upon Naples, plundered it, and set up a Parthenopœan Republic, driving the King to take refuge in Sicily, where he was protected by the British fleet. At the end of the year France rounded off her Italian conquests by occupying Piedmont, a province of the kingdom of Sardinia, with which she had made peace in 1796.

These high-handed acts brought about the formation of the second coalition, whose aim was to set a limit to French aggressions. But it would scarcely have been formed (so great was the terror which the republic now inspired) if Britain's successful resistance on the seas had not encouraged other Powers to resist, and if the terrible Napoleon had not been locked up in Egypt. Russia had already entered the war in 1798, in protest against the French seizure of Malta, but she had not yet put any armies into the field. Prussia stood aloof, because she found neutrality profitable. But Austria declared war against France in March 1799; and Britain assumed the familiar rôle of pay-mistress of the coalition. A double attack was planned: Italy and Switzerland were to be reconquered by a combined Russian and Austrian force; Holland by a combined British and Russian force. The Dutch campaign was a disastrous failure; for the Duke of York, placed in command, was compelled to capitulate at Alkmaar, and the Russian contingent was withdrawn in disgust. At first the Italian campaign was brilliantly successful. Under Suvorov, the greatest of Russian soldiers, the Austro-Russian forces swept the French out of Italy, and forced their way through the Alpine passes into Switzerland. But in September the Russians were defeated at Zurich by the brilliant French general Masséna; and the Tsar, attributing the failure to Austrian jealousy, withdrew his troops, leaving Britain and Austria once more alone to face the French power.

This was the situation when Napoleon returned from Egypt, only about ten days after the battle of Zurich was fought. Already the coalition had broken down. But Italy had been lost; the hated Directory was discredited; and Napoleon saw the chance of establishing his own mastery over France. A cleverly planned *coup d'état* in November 1799 overthrew the Directory; and Napoleon became the first of three Consuls, who were to wield all the powers of the Directory, and also to draw up a new constitution. The young general, little more than thirty years old, was now in effect master of France. There still lay before him the vast labours of reconstruction by which his power was to be made real; we shall see something of these in a later chapter.¹ But in the meanwhile he had to end the war. France was longing for peace, and it was by promising peace that he had won a welcome for the new régime; but for this conqueror the only way to peace was through victory.

¹ See below, Chap. vii. p. 225.

He struck first at Austria, two crushing blows. Napoleon himself crossed the St. Bernard Pass into Italy, won (May 1800) the lucky victory of Marengo, and swiftly re-established French supremacy in Italy ; while after a brilliant campaign in Southern Germany, Moreau won the crowning victory of Hohenlinden (December 1800), which opened the road to Vienna itself. Beaten to her knees, Austria accepted the peace of Lunéville (February 1801) ; and once more Britain was left alone to bear the brunt of the French attack. The second coalition had collapsed even more rapidly than the first.

But Britain was now far stronger than in 1796 and 1797. Her supremacy on the seas was unshakable ; and everywhere the power of the conqueror ended at the seashore. Napoleon was faced by the baffling problem of overcoming sea-power, which was to occupy his mind throughout the remainder of his career. Like the Directory, he made plans for an invasion, and set the Channel ports at work building boats for transport. But he knew that invasion without a fleet was impossible. The French and Spanish fleets were locked into their harbours ; what remained of the Dutch fleet had been destroyed during the British invasion of Holland in 1799. Other plans flitted before his mind ; notably the project of excluding British trade from Europe, which he was later to attempt.

A gleam of hope, both for the execution of this commercial project and for the acquisition of naval strength, came from the North. The neutral Powers had suffered severely from the interruption of their commerce during the war ; and though there was little to choose between the restrictions imposed by the two sides, Britain's naval power made her interferences far more effective. The Northern Powers, Sweden, Denmark and Prussia, talked of reviving the Armed Neutrality of 1780 ;¹ and in December 1800 the Tsar of Russia, though still nominally an ally of Britain, agreed to join this league. Angered by the failure of the coalition and by the British occupation of Malta, and fascinated by the genius of Napoleon, Tsar Paul had resolved to change sides ; and in January 1801 he made peace with France, and proposed an alliance against Britain and a combined Franco-Russian expedition against India. This was the first hint of Russian designs against India, which were to haunt the imagination of British statesmen for a century to come.

¹ See above, Bk. VII. chap. v. p. 64.

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Naturally Napoleon welcomed these advances with eagerness. Though he did not take the Indian project seriously, he believed that a Russian alliance would 'overcome England and preserve to us Egypt'—which was to be lost in this same year. Still more he hoped to get the co-operation of the Northern Powers in excluding British trade from the continent, and to bring their fleets into the arena against the British navy; they might be enough to decide the issue.

But these hopes were shattered by two events. The British Government demanded an explanation from Denmark, and, receiving no satisfactory reply, decided to treat the formation of the Armed Neutrality as a hostile act, and despatched a fleet under Sir Hyde Parker, with Nelson second-in-command, to the Baltic. Parker first negotiated with Denmark; and when negotiations failed, sent Nelson in to attack Copenhagen, where a formidable flotilla was moored under the guns of the forts.¹ With twelve ships Nelson boldly attacked this dangerous combination; and, disregarding a timorous signal from Parker ordering him to break off the action, battered the Danish fleet into surrender. Meanwhile the Tsar Paul had fallen a victim to a court conspiracy, and had been succeeded by his son Alexander, who readily came to an agreement with Britain, whereby in return for certain concessions he agreed to the abandonment of the more extreme claims of the Armed Neutrality.

The death of Paul and the victory of Copenhagen dissipated Napoleon's hopes of drawing naval aid from the North; once again Nelson had baffled him. To continue the struggle seemed futile. Moreover he needed an interval of quiet for the great work of reorganisation upon which he was engaged. The British Government, on its side, was ready for peace, as it had always been, provided that peace could be obtained on honourable terms. So negotiations were opened; and in October 1801 the preliminaries of peace were signed in London, though the Treaty of Amiens which was based upon them was not concluded until March 1802.

The terms of the treaty afforded evidence of the sincerity of the British desire for a settlement; for Britain, though she was undefeated, restored to France and her allies all the conquests which her sea-power had enabled her to make, with the exceptions of Ceylon and Trinidad; she even promised to give up Malta. France, on the other hand,

¹ For a plan of this battle, see Atlas, 5th Edition, *Introd.*, p. 48.

gave up nothing ; because in all these eight years she had made no conquests at the expense of Britain. The settlement was eagerly welcomed in both countries. 'This is no ordinary peace,' said Addington, the Prime Minister who negotiated it, 'but a genuine reconciliation between the two first nations of the world.' That was the view taken by many in Britain. They thought that the ugly fever of the Revolution had burnt itself out in France, and that Napoleon would be content with the empire he already possessed.

But there were others who took a less hopeful view, and feared that the peace would be no more than 'a frail and deceptive truce.' Time was to show that this was the sounder view. It was the sounder view because the permanence of peace depended upon the good-will of a man who lived by war and rejoiced in it, who was turning in his mind grandiose schemes of domination, and who had accepted peace merely because it suited his interests for the moment, and gave him a needed opportunity for consolidating his resources and preparing to win the mastery of the world.

[Fortescue, *British Statesmen of the Great War*, and *History of the British Army*; Mahan, *Influence of Sea-Power upon the French Revolution and Empire*, *Life of Nelson*, and *Types of Naval Officers*; Hunt, *England from 1760 to 1801*; Holland Rose, *William Pitt and the Great War*, *Life of Napoleon*, and *Revolutionary and Napoleonic Era*; Fyffe, *History of Modern Europe*; Morse Stephens, *Revolutionary Europe*; Gill, *Naval Mutinies of 1797*.]

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

ALTHOUGH the war of the French Revolution was an almost purely European struggle, it had very important reactions in the non-European world, and the result of these was that the second British Empire was immensely increased in extent and variety. But the influence of the war was felt in very different degrees in different parts of the empire. Canada and Australia were practically unaffected by it. In spite of their French speech and origin, the *seigneurs*, priests and *habitants* of Quebec had no sympathy with the ideas of the Revolution; and for them the years of war were (until 1812) years of unruffled calm, almost of stagnation. The convict settlements of Australia were equally unperturbed; and the most important event in their history during these exciting years was the introduction of sheep-breeding in 1799. But in the West Indies, in India, and in the lands on the ocean route to India (notably South Africa) the war in Europe led to great events. In all these regions the revolutionary war was a turning-point of the first importance in the history of the British Commonwealth.

§ 1. *The Influence of the Revolution in the West Indies.*

Even before the outbreak of war the news of the Revolution, and the heady doctrines of the Rights of Man, aroused a dangerous excitement among the negroes and half-castes of the French West Indian possessions. In the lovely and prosperous land of San Domingo this excitement led, in 1791, to the outbreak of a hideous race-war between the French settlers on the one side, and the half-castes and slaves on the other; a war which was conducted, on both sides, with pitiless cruelty. For a time the anarchy was moderated by the emergence of a negro of genius, Toussaint L'Ouverture, who held his race-fellows in restraint, and led them to victory, establishing an independent negro republic which included both the French territory of San Domingo and the Spanish half of the island, Haiti. But Toussaint

had no successor: after his fall in 1802 the anarchy deepened; and it has lasted to this day.

Anarchy was desolating San Domingo when in 1793 Britain was drawn into the war against France. One of Pitt's first acts was to despatch an expedition against the French West Indies, to prevent their being used as bases for an attack upon the British colonies. Martinique was captured in 1793; Guadeloupe, St Lucia and Tobago in 1794. Then an army was sent against San Domingo, where it was drawn into the hideous black and white war. For five years British troops were wasted in this futile and ugly struggle; and, in the end, Toussaint succeeded (1798) in expelling them. This fighting, and the fevers from which the troops suffered, cost the British army heavier losses than the war in Europe.

There were troubles also in the Windward Islands. At the end of 1794 Victor Hugues, a disciple of Robespierre, arrived from France, and, proclaiming the abolition of slavery, raised a negro army with which he recaptured Guadeloupe and St. Lucia. He also succeeded in stirring up insurrections among the French settlers in Grenada and St. Vincent. And in 1795 a rebellion broke out in Jamaica, where the Maroons—Spanish half-castes who enjoyed a practical independence in the interior of the island—attacked the settlers. There was a real danger that the anarchy of San Domingo would extend throughout the West Indies. To deal with these troubles large military forces had to be sent out in 1796; and it was only after hard fighting that order was restored. Pitt has often been condemned for squandering on the West Indies armies that were needed in Europe; but it is right to remember that he probably saved Jamaica and other islands from the ugly fate of San Domingo.

The fight against anarchy was still raging when the news came that Holland and Spain had both been drawn by France into the war against Britain. Thereupon an expedition was sent to Dutch Guiana (1796), where the Dutch settlers in Demerara and Berbice submitted without resistance, glad to be safeguarded against the spread of revolutionary ideas among their slaves. This was the real beginning of the colony of British Guiana, for though these lands were restored to Holland at the Peace of Amiens, they were to be reconquered as soon as that short-lived peace came to an end.

Next year (1797) the large Spanish island of Trinidad was occupied, almost without resistance, by a force under

General Abercromby. The Spanish government of Trinidad had been lax and inefficient, and the island had become a place of refuge for outlaws and law-breakers of many races from South America and the other islands. The first British Governor, Picton, therefore had a very hard task in establishing order. He seems to have used rough methods, and on his return he was subjected to a criminal prosecution and a Privy Council inquiry, both of which ended in his acquittal. But his methods, if irregular, were successful; and it was no small tribute to the harassed Governor that the Spanish inhabitants petitioned not to be handed back to Spain, and subscribed £4000 towards the expenses of Picton's defence. The fact of his prosecution was, however, a sign that conscience was awakened in regard to the government of dependencies.

No attempt was made to attack the Spanish possessions other than Trinidad. But in a remote and neglected corner the entry of Spain into the war brought on a romantic struggle. Ever since the early seventeenth century bands of Englishmen had haunted the Bay of Campeachy on the coast of Honduras, in order to cut logwood. Spain had always objected to their presence on this coast, and in 1798 she resolved to clear them out once for all, and sent for that purpose a fleet and an army of 2000 men. But the 'Baymen,' as they were called, aided only by one British ship and a handful of soldiers, carried on a skilful fight among the islets and lagoons of the coast, and beat off the Spanish attack. This was the real beginning of British Honduras, although its formal and official recognition as a British colony did not come until 1862.

In spite of these troubles, however, the years of war were a time of very great prosperity for the British West Indies. Most of the British islands were quite untouched by the fighting; and under the secure protection of British naval supremacy the planters enjoyed almost a monopoly of the world's markets. Their trade and their population rapidly increased, and formed a real contribution to the strength of the Commonwealth during the great ordeal.

§ 2. *The Conquest of the Dutch Colonies : Cape Colony and Ceylon.*

The most important outcome of the war in the field of colonisation was the occupation of the Dutch settlement at

the Cape of Good Hope, the half-way house to India. In 1795 Holland, under the name of the 'Batavian Republic,' became a vassal of France. To leave in hostile hands a strategic point so important as the Cape appeared to be extremely dangerous, especially as France was notoriously making plans for an attack on India. When, therefore, the Batavian Republic passed under French influence, a fleet and a small army were promptly despatched to the Cape (1796). Little resistance was offered at Cape Town; and though some of the up-country farmers held out for a time, they soon submitted. Thus the first contact was established between the British Commonwealth and the virile Dutch people, who had developed on African soil a distinctive civilisation of their own.

Ever since its first plantation in 1652, the settlement at the Cape had been subjected by the Dutch East India Company to a régime of the most rigid autocracy, which allowed no shadow of self-government to the settlers. The Company had prohibited free immigration, because it wished the settlement to be no more than a calling-station for the supply of fresh food to ships on the way to the East. It had also reserved to itself a strict monopoly of trade; and this had prevented contact with the outer world. The result was that the colony had preserved in a remarkable degree the character of its first settlers. These had been Dutchmen imbued with the stern Calvinistic Protestantism of the seventeenth century; and after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) they had been reinforced by many French Huguenots who shared their religious beliefs. Unaffected by the movements of thought of the eighteenth century, these remote and isolated settlers retained the ideas of the age of religious wars, and knew and cared little about the more modern world and its theories.

It had been the policy of the Dutch Company to prevent the settlers from spreading beyond the immediate neighbourhood of Cape Town. But it was impossible to enforce such restrictions upon a people so virile and independent. They had trekked far afield, beyond the reach of the arm of Government; when the British occupation took place they had already got as far as Graaff Reinet, beyond the Great Karoo;¹ and the more widely they spread, the more independent and resentful of control they became. As they spread outwards they came in contact with the native races, towards whom they entertained the sentiments of the

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 64 (b), 6th Edition Plate 89 (b)

seventeenth century. The Hottentots, whom they found in the south-east corner of the continent, were subjugated and enslaved; the wilder and more primitive Bushmen were hunted down and almost exterminated. Farther east, they came in contact with the more vigorous tribes of the Kaffirs, the advance-guard of the prolific Bantu stock which was pressing down into South Africa from the north-east. Already the long series of Kaffir wars, which fill the early part of South African history, was beginning; a struggle in which there was no quarter on either side, and in which these virile farmers trained themselves for war.

The task of governing such a people was no easy one. But all that concerned the British representatives during this first occupation was to secure the strategic point of Table Bay; and the farmers were left, in the main, to themselves. The chief changes were that there was no further attempt to restrict their expansion, and that they were allowed freedom of trade.

Away in the Indian Ocean another Dutch possession, the lovely island of Ceylon, threatened the security of India still more directly than the Cape. Since the middle of the seventeenth century the Dutch had dominated the coastal region of Ceylon, though they had never overcome the kingdom of Kandy in the mountainous centre of the island. The depth of the mark which they left is shown by the fact that Roman-Dutch law is still administered in the courts of Ceylon, as in South Africa. In 1795, on orders from home, a detachment of the East India Company's troops was sent to effect the conquest of the island. There was little resistance, and for a time Ceylon was administered under the Presidency of Madras. Madras was at this time the most corrupt and inefficient of the British governments in India; the behaviour of its agents aroused revolts; and when these were suppressed, the home Government decided (1798) that Ceylon should not remain under the East India Company, but should be separately administered under the direct authority of the British Crown. It became, therefore, and has since remained, a Crown colony, not owning any dependence upon the Government of India. It has had, on the whole, a tranquil history of steadily increasing prosperity, and will not much engage our attention.

§ 3. *The Crisis of 1798 in India.*

Immeasurably the greatest result of the Revolutionary war for the British Commonwealth was the change which it

brought about in the position of the British power in India, a change which turned Britain into the paramount Power in India.

The news that Britain was involved in the war against revolutionary France reached India almost at the moment when Lord Cornwallis sailed for England at the conclusion of his governorship (October 1793). As we have seen,¹ Cornwallis had been forced to depart from the principle of non-intervention in Indian politics, upon which the home authorities had insisted ever since the close of Warren Hastings' governorship. He had made an alliance with the Mahrattas and with the Nizam of Hyderabad, and in conjunction with them had defeated Tipu Sahib of Mysore. Cornwallis would have liked to give permanence to this Triple Alliance, and to make it a means for the preservation of Indian peace. But the principle of non-intervention would not permit of any permanent commitment of this kind. Cornwallis's successor, Sir John Shore (1793-1798), felt himself bound to abstain from all definite treaty obligations with native Powers. These Powers were therefore driven to the conclusion that it was dangerous to place any reliance upon the Company; they must protect themselves. And, as they had learned the potency of European military methods, they borrowed French officers to organise their armies for them.

When Cornwallis sailed for England, Indian politics were in a very unsettled condition.² Apart from the Company, there were only four Indian Powers, that counted for anything in a military sense. Of these Oudh had long been a dependent vassal of the Company. But its government was corrupt and incompetent, and its forces were undisciplined. It could offer no resistance to an attack either from the Mahrattas, or from the Afghans under Zeman Shah, who were threatening a new invasion of India. Even Sir John Shore felt that he must intervene to remedy the chaos of Oudh, especially as, by several treaties, the Company was bound to defend that State. But when he did so he was threatened with impeachment, so resolute was the home Government to abstain from all interference with the Indian States. In the South, Tipu Sahib, recently defeated but still very powerful, was nursing projects of revenge; he was conducting secret negotiations with the French in Mauritius, and engaging French officers to reorganise his army. This

¹ See above, Bk. VII chap. XI p. 143.

² See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 61 (a), 6th Edition Plate 65 (a).

ruthless and arbitrary despot even pretended to sympathise with the ideas of the revolution ; and he was known in Paris as *citoyen Tipou*, and looked to as a future helper of France in an attack on the British power. In the centre and West the formidable power of the Mahratta confederacy was at its height when Cornwallis left India. For some years its dominating personality had been the great fighting chieftain, Mahdaji Sindhia, with whom, for a time, Warren Hastings had made friends. Sindhia had obtained control of Delhi and of the person of the nominal Mogul Emperor. His strength rested upon his possession of a large army, trained in the European fashion and well equipped with artillery ; and the command of this army was in the hands of French officers. If he had lived it is possible that he might have made himself master of almost the whole of India. But his death in 1794 brought about a new period of confusion and civil war among the Mahratta princes ; and it was perhaps only this sudden change in the Mahratta fortunes that saved the British power from a very great danger. 4.

The last of the greater Indian Powers was the Nizam of Hyderabad. His lands lay between Tipu on the one hand and the Mahrattas on the other ; and he lived in constant dread of both his neighbours. He would have eagerly welcomed the protection of a British alliance, the mere assurance of which might have been enough to ward off the danger of war. But the doctrine of non-intervention forbade. For his own safety, therefore, the Nizam engaged French officers to organise and lead his army. In 1795 the whole Mahratta confederacy combined in an onslaught upon the Nizam. He appealed to Shore for protection ; Shore refused ; and at the battle of Kurdla the Nizam was overwhelmed, and only saved from complete destruction by the disputes which broke out among the Mahratta chiefs almost immediately after their victory. His French-trained force had not saved him. But it had fought gallantly ; it was his only defence ; and he had finally abandoned all confidence in the British power.

Thus the three greatest Indian States were all more or less alienated from the Company, and had learned to despise it. What was more serious, they were all under the influence of French officers, who hoped to use this influence to reverse the results of the earlier conflicts between France and Britain in India. This was the situation in India when Napoleon's Egyptian expedition was planned in the winter of 1797-1798, for the express purpose of finding in Egypt a

base for an attack upon India. Tipu Sahib had concluded an alliance with the French in Mauritius. He was secretly negotiating also with the Nawab of the Carnatic, nominally a vassal of the Company. Once Tipu began the war, it might be anticipated that the influence of the French officers at the courts of the Nizam and the Mahrattas would lead these Powers also to attack the Company's dominions; and in that event there was small chance that the British power would survive, especially if Napoleon should succeed in sending even a small force from Egypt. The British power in India had thus reached a very grave crisis in 1798; and the main cause of this crisis was the well-meant doctrine of non-intervention.

§ 4. *The Marquis Wellesley and the Rapid Extension of British Power in India, 1798-1803.*

In April 1798—three months before Napoleon's landing in Egypt—a new Governor-General had arrived in India; Richard Wellesley,¹ Earl of Mornington and later Marquis Wellesley, elder brother of the young soldier Arthur, whom he brought with him, and who was to become Duke of Wellington. Lord Mornington was, in his own way, as remarkable a man as his younger brother: able, forceful, not afraid of responsibility, a man of prompt decision and resolute in action, he ranks second only to Warren Hastings in the long roll of British rulers of India. His first survey showed him the dangers of the Indian situation. If they were to be dealt with, a bold departure from the policy of non-intervention was necessary. Wellesley swung back to the policy of Warren Hastings; he resolved to fix the shifting politics of India by a series of definite treaties with all the main Indian Powers. But he went further than Hastings ever dreamed of going: he definitely aimed at making the Company not merely the pivot of a system of alliances which should maintain the peace, but the actual paramount power. Only so, he believed, could security be attained; and only so could peace be guaranteed in India.

The most immediate danger plainly came from Tipu Sahib; and the best chance of preventing a great hostile combination lay in detaching the Nizam by an appeal to his fears and his sense of weakness. On the one hand, therefore, the Governor-General opened negotiations with Tipu to

¹ There is a good short life of Wellesley, by W. H. Hutton, in the 'Rulers of India' Series.

make him unmask, while at the same time vigorous military preparations were set on foot. On the other hand, the Nizam was offered the protection of a British force and a practical guarantee of his territories, on condition that he would disband his French-officered army, and that he would combine forces against Tipu should war break out. The Nizam readily fell in with this arrangement (September 1798), which gave him a security both against Tipu and the Mahrattas that he could get in no other way. At the same time the Peshwa (head of the Mahratta confederacy) was invited to renew the alliance against Tipu which had been made in Cornwallis's time.

The result of these arrangements was that Tipu was isolated ; and when his formal alliance with the French was announced at the beginning of 1799, the Governor-General was able to launch against him a campaign, every detail of which had been thoroughly thought out beforehand. In a month Tipu was overwhelmed ; his capital, Seringapatam, was taken by storm (May), and Tipu himself fell in the thick of the fighting. His dominions awaited Wellesley's disposal. One block of territory was given to the Nizam ; a second was offered to, but refused by, the Mahrattas. The Company itself took the lands on the west coast which Tipu and his father had conquered, and also a broad belt of territory linking up these lands with Madras.¹ In what remained of the kingdom of Mysore, Wellesley restored the ancient Hindu dynasty whose throne Tipu's father had usurped a generation earlier. But the restored prince, received his State under the terms of a treaty which definitely reduced him to subordination. He undertook to pay the cost of a British force which would protect him, but at the same time keep him obedient ; and he pledged himself not to have any relations with any external Power without the assent of the Company. This was the model of the 'subsidiary alliances' which formed Wellesley's chief instrument in the establishment of British supremacy. It guaranteed the dependent prince in the possession of his territories, and left him free to govern them in his own way. But it deprived him of the means of stirring up war ; and, therefore, in proportion as these treaties were extended, the reign of peace was extended in a degree which India had never known.

Having banished the danger from Tipu, Wellesley proceeded to carry out a readjustment of Southern India.

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 61 (c), 6th Edition Plate 65 (c).

The Nizam was readily persuaded (1800) to accept a permanent subsidiary alliance, not so stringent as that imposed upon Mysore, but conceived on the same lines. The Nawabs of the Carnatic, who had been intriguing with Tipu, and whose lands were shamefully misgoverned, was pensioned off; and the Carnatic was brought under British administration (1801). The Raja of Tanjore also was persuaded, not unwillingly, to accept a handsome pension and hand over his lands to be administered by British officers. These acquisitions of territory created the Presidency of Madras as it exists to-day. A new system of revenue, of justice and of local administration had to be wrought out for this extensive province. One of Wellesley's greatest gifts was his judgment of men; and for these constructive labours he picked out a group of extremely able and enlightened men, some of whom, such as Sir Thomas Munro, were to win eminence by the insight, the uprightness, and the sympathy with Indian ways which their work displayed. Thus by 1801, within three years of his landing in India, Wellesley had made the East India Company the paramount Power throughout Southern India. The territory under direct British rule had been multiplied many fold; the native States had been brought into a clearly defined position of vassalage; and the only regions not subject to British supremacy in Southern India were those which were ruled by the Mahrattas.

Meanwhile, Wellesley had also transformed the situation in the North, by making a new arrangement with Oudh. The misgovernment and confusion of Oudh were such as to make it no longer a protection, but a danger, to Bengal; Shore's attempted reform had led to no good results. If it were attacked, Oudh must inevitably collapse; and its collapse would open Bengal to invasion. To be committed to the defence of a State which by its misgovernment and disorganisation positively invited attack, was to Wellesley intolerable. With a good deal of difficulty, he persuaded the Vizier of Oudh to accept a new treaty on the familiar lines, whereby he gave up the right of dealing independently with other States, and in return for a guarantee of protection ceded to the Company about half of his territories (1801).¹ The ceded lands curved round his diminished realm, which was now surrounded by British territory everywhere save on the North, where it was guarded by the impassable Himalayas. Instead of using Oudh as a rampart against

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 61 (c), 6th Edition Plate 65 (c), where these territories are indicated.

the Company's enemies (which had been the accepted policy ever since the days of Clive) Wellesley had thus interposed a belt of British territory between Oudh and any possible foe. These new annexations brought the British power nearly to the gates of Delhi, gave it control of almost the whole of the rich Gangetic plain, and made it, along a very extensive frontier, the next neighbour of the Mahrattas. The Company was now definitely supreme over almost the whole of Southern India, and over nearly all the Gangetic plain. Between these two great blocks of territory, separating them and almost surrounded by them, lay the Mahratta Empire.¹ India was in effect now divided between two great empires, the British and the Mahratta, of which the former held all the richest and most populous areas. In the midst of their intestine feuds, the Mahratta chieftains were suddenly awakened to the fact that the British power, which had seemed all but negligible five years earlier, had grown like Jonah's gourd, and threatened them from two sides. If the Mahrattas were not to abandon tamely the supremacy which had seemed within their grasp, it was inevitable that a duel should be fought between them and this suddenly created Power.

§ 5. *Wellesley's War with the Mahrattas, 1803-1805.*

During the years when Wellesley was at work upon the reorganisation of Southern India and of the Ganges Valley, a bewildering feud had been raging among the principal Mahratta chieftains. We need not attempt to follow it. But in October 1802, it came to a crisis. The chief Holkar defeated, near Poona, the combined forces of his nominal superior, the Peshwa, and of his rival Sindhia, and set up a puppet Peshwa of his own. Thereupon the defeated and fugitive Peshwa, Baji Rao, asked for British aid. Wellesley would only give it on condition that Baji Rao would sign a treaty of subsidiary alliance, pledging himself to have no independent dealings with other Powers, and to accept and pay for a subsidiary force. Having no other hope of restoration to his throne, Baji Rao submitted to these terms in the Treaty of Bassein (December 1802); and in May 1803 was escorted back to Poona by a British force under Arthur Wellesley. The head of the Mahratta confederacy reascended his throne as a vassal of the East India Company.

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 61 (c), 6th Edition Plate 65 (c).

The Treaty of Bassein was a thunderbolt. Wellesley's action in making use of the distress of the Peshwa to obtain such a treaty was strongly criticised at home, on the ground that it must almost inevitably involve the Company in a Mahratta war. Wellesley knew well enough that this consequence was likely to follow. He was not afraid of it, having come to the conclusion that the only chance of lasting peace in India lay in the establishment of an effective British supremacy. The Directors and the British Government were both deeply averse from the adoption of any such bold and ambitious policy. But they could not interfere. No news of events in India could reach them until at least six months after the events took place; and by the time their instructions on this late information could reach India, another six months or more must pass. Before their condemnation of the Treaty of Bassein reached India, the second Mahratta war had broken out (August 1803).

It was indeed plain that the Mahratta chiefs could not assent to the Treaty of Bassein without definitely abandoning all hope of a Mahratta supremacy in India. But so deep were the divisions among them that, even in face of this menace, they could not unite. The two greatest of the chieftains, Sindhia and Bhonsla (Raja of Nagpur and Berar), joined forces to resist the British supremacy; but Holkar stood jealously aloof.

In a short but hard-fought campaign the power of Sindhia and Bhonsla was broken. The attack upon them was twofold. In the Deccan (the South) Arthur Wellesley was given command of an army which had to deal with the southern forces of Sindhia, and with Bhonsla. With half his army he attacked at Assaye a French-trained army of Sindhia's, outnumbering his own by eight to one, and after a desperate struggle won a complete victory (September 1803). Then at Argaon (November) he shattered the power of Bhonsla, and forced him to submit to a subsidiary alliance, and to cede the coast province of Cuttack (Orissa), which linked up Bengal with Madras. Meanwhile, in the North, General Lake, advancing from the lands recently ceded by Oudh, had dealt with Sindhia's main French-trained armies. He had carried by storm the strong fort of Aligarh, constructed by French engineers according to the accepted principles of Western military engineering; he had defeated, below the walls of Delhi, Sindhia's main army under the French officer Bourquin, though it outnumbered the British force by four to one; he had occupied Delhi itself,

and taken under British protection the poor old blind Mogul Emperor, Shah Alam, who had been for over thirty years under Mahratta control; he had captured the great fortress of Agra; and finally he had destroyed Sindhia's last army at the hard-fought battle of Laswari. Sindhia also was forced (December 1803) to accept a subsidiary alliance.

The campaign of 1803, which had lasted for only five months, but had seen fiercer fighting than the British had yet experienced in India, seemed to have broken the Mahratta power. It had finally destroyed French influence in India; the French-trained armies had been shattered, and the treaties of peace demanded the expulsion of all citizens of States at war with Britain. The Mogul, who was the symbol of supremacy over India, had passed from the control of the Mahrattas into the control of the Company. The Company seemed to have become the paramount Power over the whole of India, or at any rate of all India south-east of the Sutlej and the Indus; for most of the Rajput princes of the North-West, who had long resented the exactions of the Mahrattas, were ready, even eager, to enter into direct treaty relations with the British power.

But one Mahratta prince still remained unconquered. This was Holkar, whose jealousy of Sindhia had led him to hold aloof from the recent war. Now, suddenly realising his danger, he prepared for war. Unlike Sindhia, Holkar had not remodelled his army on European lines, but had clung to the old Mahratta method of employing, in the main, rapidly moving bodies of light horse. His methods enabled him to inflict a crushing blow upon a strong column under Colonel Monson, which had rashly advanced too far into hostile territory without securing its communications. The defeat of Monson (May 1804) was a grave blow to British prestige, and stimulated every element of discontent, and all who feared the approaching rule of peace. Though Holkar's capital (Indore) was captured, and he was severely defeated at Deeg (December 1804), his irregular horsemen still held the field. Early in 1805 British arms received another check when General Lake failed to capture the fortress of Bharatpur, whose Raja had joined Holkar. It was, indeed, more difficult to achieve decisive results against Holkar's irregular and elusive forces than against the solidly organised armies which Sindhia had put into the field. Yet his resistance was being gradually worn down

during 1805, and if Wellesley had been left free to complete his plans, there is no room for doubt that Holkar would have been subjugated like his rivals, and that the complete ascendancy of the British power would have been established throughout India. With that would have come the reign of peace.

But the defeat of Monson and the check at Bharatpur gave an excuse to the Directors and to the home Government for bringing to a close the aggressive policy of the masterful Governor-General. They had never approved of this policy, though at each stage their hands had been forced by accomplished facts. They shrank from the tremendous responsibility which Wellesley was assuming in their name—the responsibility of guaranteeing peace and order throughout the whole of India; they honestly felt, moreover, that these immense conquests were contrary to the whole spirit of British policy. They did not realise that the only hope of peace in India lay in the establishment of a single suzerain power capable of enforcing it. So Wellesley was recalled, and even threatened with impeachment; and Lord Cornwallis was sent out in his place, with instructions to end the war as rapidly as possible, to make no new acquisitions of territory, and to return as completely as might be to the old policy of non-intervention.

Cornwallis, now an old man, was a wreck when he reached India (1805), and died two months after landing. The business of ending the war and making a political settlement was left to Sir George Barlow. Meanwhile Lake had pursued Holkar into the Punjab, and had him so completely at his mercy that he must have accepted whatever terms were dictated to him. To Lake's disgust, Barlow, acting on his instructions from home, insisted that Holkar must be restored to all his territories. He insisted also that no protection must be offered to the Rajput princes upon whom the Mahrattas had long preyed, and who had, for that reason, thrown their strength on the British side in the conflict. The treaty with Holkar actually stipulated that no assistance should be given by the British power to any of these States; and for ten years to come a large part of Central India was sentenced to an indescribable state of anarchy, in the midst of which the Mahrattas prepared for a future renewal of their old ambitions.

Thus the work of Wellesley was left incomplete. Yet in seven years he had brought about an extraordinary transformation of the Company's position. Whatever the

non-interventionists might say or do, the British power had become the supreme power in India, and it could no more shake off the responsibilities attaching to that position than, forty years earlier, it could shake off the responsibility for the government of Bengal which Plassey and Buxar had thrown upon it. The British Empire *in* India had become the British Empire *of* India, less than half a century after the rout of Plassey; and the responsibility of giving peace and justice to a realm wider and more populous than all the lands which Napoleon conquered had become an obligation resting upon the British people.

Wellesley was not only a great conqueror, he was a great administrative reformer. The work of organising the wide new provinces brought under British rule was an immense task, and it was well and honestly done. The men whom Wellesley chose for this work were the founders of a new tradition of administration which was to show great results during the next generation; while the men who served as Residents at the courts of the dependent States set the model for a new kind of public service, not less valuable and even more difficult. In the actual machinery of justice and of government in the older provinces the Governor's reforming zeal equally displayed itself. He carried into effect a separation of judicial and administrative work which was of the highest value; and although his bold proposals were never accepted, he had formed schemes for the reorganisation of every part of the system. But his schemes frightened the Directors, and nothing came of them.

In truth, the Directors and the home Government, while they took credit for moderation of aim and for a dislike of aggression and conquest, were far less generous in their conception of Indian policy, far less penetrated by a sense of obligation for the welfare of the Indian peoples, than the bold and haughty proconsul whom they criticised. It was he, 'the Akbar of the Company's dynasty,' the creator of the British Empire of India, and not they, who held the nobler view of the function which Fate had so strangely thrust upon Britain in the East.

[Lucas, *Historical Geography of the West Indies*; Theal, *History of South Africa and South Africa* (in the 'Story of the Nations' Series); Cory, *History of South Africa*; Dorman, *History of the British Empire in the 19th Century* (begins in 1793); Muir, *Making of British India*; Roberts, *Historical Geography of India*; Owen, *Selection from Wellesley's Despatches and Selections from Wellington's Indian Despatches*, with good introductions; Malcolm, *Political History of India* (1784-1823); Marshman, *History of India*; Mill and Wilson, *History of British India*.]

CHAPTER V

THE TRAGEDY OF IRELAND: THE REBELLION OF 1798 AND THE UNION

(A.D. 1782-1801)

§ 1. *The Problem of Reform, 1782-1791.*

THERE was no country in which the French Revolution had more profound or more disastrous consequences than in Ireland. For it came at a moment when a healthy national spirit was beginning to unite the divided parties; and by substituting brute force for persuasion it violently interrupted the process of reconciliation, and created new and bitter hatreds to poison the life of the Irish people.

A happier era than Ireland had yet known seemed to be dawning during the decade following the concession of legislative independence in 1782. The old trade restrictions had gone, and Ireland was enjoying an unwonted prosperity. Most of the social disabilities of the Catholics (though not their political disabilities) had disappeared, and among the educated classes the spirit of tolerance was so widespread that the removal of the political disabilities seemed to be only a question of time. Among the peasantry of both faiths, indeed, religious animosities were still easily stirred, and in 1784 and later years there were ominous faction fights in Ulster between the (Protestant) Peep-o'-Day Boys and the (Catholic) Defenders. Agrarian outrages also were still frequent: they showed the need for economic reforms. But these things were deplored by the educated classes of both faiths. It was reasonable to hope that the growing sense of national unity, which was healing the ancient religious feud, would find remedies for these ills.

In the view of Catholics and Protestants alike, the chief symbol of Irish nationhood was the Parliament, whose legislative independence had been won in 1782. But this Parliament was very unrepresentative, and stood in need of drastic reform. Catholics took no part in its election.

Even Ulster Presbyterians could not be elected to it. A majority of its 300 members sat for pocket-boroughs, controlled by a small group of great borough-owners. More than one-third of the members held Government posts or pensions, and voted as Government prescribed; and the Irish executive was still nominated by the British Crown. So long as Government and the borough-owners were in harmony, British control over the Irish Parliament was almost as effective as it had been before 1782; and by a judicious distribution of favours, Government was in fact almost always able to make sure of a majority. It was, indeed, by these means that the British Government contrived to ensure that Irish and British policy should not be at cross-purposes; and as unity of purpose between the two islands was of vital importance, especially in time of war, it was unlikely that the British Government would sacrifice its hold over the Irish Parliament. Any large measure of reform, by making the Irish Parliament really independent, would involve the danger of a conflict of policy between the two Governments. It would reproduce the unworkable system which had caused such difficulty in Scotland between 1689 and 1707:¹ hence both the British Government and the reigning oligarchy in Ireland were hostile to the idea of any substantial reform. The chief representative of the ruling oligarchy throughout this period, and the dominating figure in the Irish Government, was the Lord Chancellor, Fitzgibbon, afterwards Earl of Clare. A man of strong intellect and firm will, he held that the first duty of the party which he led was to maintain British power in Ireland; and while he was willing to make concessions on other points, he was resolutely opposed to any proposals which threatened the British supremacy—as any real scheme of reform must necessarily do. Fitzgibbon's masterful, clear-sighted and uncompromising temper made him one of the protagonists throughout the tragic story which we have to narrate in this chapter.

Unhappily there was no unity of opinion among the advocates of reform. Some, like the Whigs in England, thought that no more was necessary than a reduction of the means of corruption at the disposal of Government. A group led by Flood and Lord Charlemont would have given a widened franchise to Protestants, but excluded the Catholics; and in 1783 Flood tried, fortunately in vain, to make use of the volunteers in support of this programme.

¹ Vol. I. pp. 581-3.

Among the Ulster Presbyterians there were extreme democrats who advocated manhood suffrage for Catholics and Protestants on equal terms. But the wisest and most healing policy was that advocated by Grattan, who would have given equal rights in all respects to Catholics and Protestants, but on a limited franchise; for Grattan recognised the danger of entrusting political power to an ignorant peasantry inflamed by religious animosities. A reform on Grattan's lines would assuredly have averted the horrors that were to come. It would have satisfied the Catholics. It would have been accepted even by the Ulster Presbyterians. But, undeniably, it would have complicated the relations between Britain and Ireland, and made the co-ordination of their policy very difficult. For that reason it was certain to be resisted not only by the Irish borough-owners, but by the British Government. Britain was condemned not only to appear, but actually to be, the chief obstacle to the solution of this fundamental Irish problem.

§ 2. *The United Irishmen and the Demand for Catholic Emancipation, 1791-1795.*

Into these discussions on parliamentary reform a new fervour and greater bitterness were imported by the influence of the French Revolution. The ideas of the Revolution found a ready welcome among the Presbyterians of Ulster, who early opened a correspondence with the French clubs, like the reform societies in England and Scotland. In 1791 an able young Belfast lawyer, Wolfe Tone, published a trenchant pamphlet, in which he argued bitterly that British influence made it futile to hope for reform from the Irish Parliament, and urged that Irishmen of both faiths should unite to secure their own freedom. Tone was vehemently anti-British in sentiment, and held that a complete severance of the connexion with Britain ought to be effected with French aid. Most of his Ulster compatriots did not go so far. But they sympathised with his general ideas; and when he founded in Belfast a *Society of United Irishmen* whose object was to combine Protestants and Catholics in a demand for complete democracy, branch organisations rapidly sprang up in every part of Protestant Ulster.

It is significant that the revolutionary and anti-British movement should have been begun in Ulster; it is not less significant that for some years it was practically confined to

Ulster. For the Catholics of the South had no sympathy with the Revolution, which had begun by attacking their Church; and apart from a few adherents in Dublin, the United Irish movement obtained scarcely any recruits among them until 1795. The educated Catholics were, indeed, beginning to agitate for parliamentary privileges; but what they wanted was a measure of reform such as Grattan advocated, not a revolutionary upheaval. On the other hand the ignorant Catholic peasantry, stirred perhaps by the unrest that was in the air, were being captured in these years by the Defender movement, which had at first no political ends, but was aimed at purely economic grievances, notably the exaction of tithe. The Defenders organised themselves in secret societies for the conduct of midnight outrages; and they were easily stirred to religious fanaticism, especially in Ulster, where the homes of Protestants were burnt, magistrates were murdered, and there were many affrays between Protestants and Catholics. From 1791 onwards this formless movement of blind violence steadily extended its range, until in 1795 it was raging in more than half of the Irish counties. Defenderism was an ugly and menacing thing; but it appeared to have no connexion whatever with the movement of the United Irishmen, whose object was to destroy those sectarian bitternesses by which the Defenders were inspired. It seemed impossible that these hostile agitations should ever coalesce.

Alarming as was the spread of the Defender movement, it was unhappily of a kind familiar in Ireland; and Government was less perturbed by it than by the activities of the United Irishmen. They were believed to be in negotiation with the French; and this belief was confirmed in 1794, when a French agent was arrested and tried in Dublin. Because of the revelations made in this trial, Wolfe Tone and others had to flee to France, where they strove to bring about a French invasion of Ireland. Henceforth the United Irish movement was labelled as a definitely treasonable conspiracy.

Against this danger from the Ulster Protestants, Pitt held that the greatest safeguard would be found in winning the support of the Catholics, who had every reason to hate the Revolution, and who were as yet untouched by the movement of revolt. In 1793, the first year of the war, he overbore the opposition of Fitzgibbon and other ascendancy leaders, and compelled them to carry through the Irish

Parliament a remarkable measure, which at one stroke conferred the franchise upon Catholics on equal terms with Protestants. This Act was meant to win the loyalty of the Catholics, and for a moment it earned their gratitude. But its effect was spoiled in two ways. While it gave to Catholics the right of voting, it did not make them eligible to Parliament, or to the most important offices; a stigma still rested upon every Catholic; and the more loyal and conservative leaders among the Catholic gentry were prevented from exercising their influence. This was a disastrous blunder. Its effect was deepened when Fitzgibbon publicly admitted that the measure had been forced upon the majority in the Irish Parliament by the British Government. This implied that the legislative independence of the Irish Parliament was unreal; and that, if necessary legislation was not passed, the British Government was probably to blame.

The Act of 1793 had, in truth, done more harm than good. But it was not too late to remedy the blunder: the Catholics were still quiet, still loyal. At the end of 1794 the Whigs of Burke's group joined Pitt's ministry; and one of the ministerial changes which this involved was the appointment of a Whig, Lord Fitzwilliam, to the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland. Fitzwilliam was a friend of Grattan, and was known to be an advocate of Grattan's programme of complete Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform. Pitt knew this when he made the appointment; and his instructions to Fitzwilliam were that, while Catholic Emancipation must not be introduced as a Government measure, it need not be opposed. Fitzwilliam's appointment was hailed with delight by Catholics and by Protestant reformers. When it was learned that he had encouraged Grattan to introduce an Emancipation Bill, and that he had dismissed from office the leading representative of the borough-owning oligarchy, hopes were raised to the highest pitch.

They were raised only to be disappointed; for six weeks after Fitzwilliam's arrival in Dublin he was suddenly recalled, and replaced by a Lord-Lieutenant who completely reversed his policy. The only possible explanation of this disastrous action on Pitt's part is that he had been frightened by the ascendancy party into changing his policy. But nothing could have had a worse effect, in the tense and excited condition of public opinion, than to raise great hopes and then suddenly to disappoint them. The

Irish people lost faith in the honesty and good intent of the British Government. Lord Charlemont predicted that the result must be to drive the mass of the people into the arms of the revolutionaries ; the United Irish leaders themselves later testified that their cause had made no progress, except among the Presbyterians, 'until the recall of Earl Fitzwilliam.' Their cause progressed with a vengeance during the next three years. For Fitzwilliam's recall was the turning-point in a tragic history. It was the rejection of an opportunity that could never recur.

§ 3. *Growing Anarchy and the Rebellion of 1798.*

Over the next three years hangs the gradually deepening shadow of an approaching tragedy.

In 1795, after Fitzwilliam's recall, the United Irishmen began to organise for a general rebellion, which was to be supported by a French invasion. They worked out an elaborate secret organisation, which was gradually spread over the country, with small local 'lodges' at the base, grouped under a hierarchy of barony committees, county committees, provincial committees, and at the head a small directory whose membership was known only to a few.

But if a general rebellion was to take place, the mass of the Catholic peasantry must be brought in, and the peasantry cared nothing about political democracy. To win them over, the United Irish leaders set themselves to capture the Defender movement, with the promise that tithes should be abolished. Defenderism spread with alarming rapidity, and as it spread religious animosity was intensified. In Ulster there was open fighting between Catholics and Protestants—a pitched battle took place at Armagh in the spring of 1795 ; and the Protestants in self-defence began to organise themselves in Orange lodges, and to harry their Catholic neighbours out of the countryside. In their eagerness to stir up rebellion, the United Irish leaders were playing with fire. All but the more fanatical democrats among the Ulster Presbyterians were gradually frightened away from the movement. It had begun as an attempt to obliterate the hateful religious feud which had so long torn Ireland asunder ; it was being turned into the means of bringing it to a pitch of bitterness without parallel even in the dark past. Catholic peasants, driven out of Ulster, spread the story that the Orangemen had vowed to exterminate all Catholics ; and some of the United Irish leaders

did not hesitate to encourage this story, using the ignorance and the ancient hatreds of the wretched peasantry for their own purposes. United Irish lodges were rapidly increasing in Southern Ireland during 1795 and 1796; but they no longer preached reconciliation. And the Catholic gentry and priests, alienated and embittered, had almost ceased to exercise any restraining influence.

In 1796 the conspirators began to drill and arm their ignorant and misguided flocks. Muskets were smuggled into the country in large numbers. Blacksmiths were everywhere kept busy in the manufacture of long pikes. The country was rapidly reaching a state of anarchy. Government passed an Insurrection Act, imposing crushing penalties upon those who took seditious oaths, and *Habeas Corpus* was suspended; but even these severe measures were of little avail. Meanwhile the project of a French invasion was being worked out. In December 1796 a great French fleet, with an army of 15,000 men, under the famous Lazare Hoche, succeeded in evading the British fleet and in reaching Irish waters. Had this army been landed, Ireland would almost certainly have been lost. But a fog scattered the French fleet; and a storm blew out to sea the 15 vessels which reached Bantry Bay. Luck, not skill, had saved Britain from a disaster.

Yet it is significant that, when the invasion threatened, the Catholic population of the South-west proved to be staunchly loyal. They were not yet much affected by the United Irish movement. But the movement was spreading; there were 200,000 men drilling in 1797. And for that year a still greater French expedition, supported by the French, Spanish and Dutch fleets, was projected. This was the peril which made 1797 a year of wearing anxiety in Britain, and which doubled the horror of the naval mutinies. This was the nightmare which the naval victories of St. Vincent and Camperdown dispelled.¹

Faced by these dangers, the Irish Government resolved on more drastic measures; and in 1797 General Lake was ordered to disarm Ulster, where the United Irish movement was most dangerous. The disarmament of a whole countryside is in any case a difficult task, open to many abuses. Lacking a sufficiency of regular troops, Lake had to entrust much of the work to Protestant yeomanry, recruited in the district, who were almost frantic with fear and hate, the cruellest of passions; and grim and cruel deeds were done.

¹ See above, pp. 178, 179.

The news of what was happening in Ulster spread to the rest of Ireland : it seemed to confirm the ugly story of the threatened Orange Fury. And the United Irish leaders, seeing their organisation undermined, came to the decision that the rebellion must be precipitated before it was too late. They still hoped for, and promised, a French invasion for 1798. The hope was a vain one ; for since Camperdown the British fleet commanded the seas, and Napoleon himself had reported that invasion was impossible.

But the United Irish leaders had neither vigour nor resolution ; and Government was kept in touch, by spies, with all their plans. In March 1798 all but one of the Leinster executive were suddenly arrested, and for a time this dislocated their schemes. Martial law was proclaimed in Leinster, and soldiers and yeomanry were sent to disarm the population. The cruelties of the Ulster disarmament of 1797 were repeated in a more dreadful form. There were wholesale floggings, burnings of houses, indiscriminate shootings—a real Reign of Terror, inspired by terror. But instead of averting rebellion, these savageries precipitated it. The United Irishmen hastily reconstructed their directory, and sent out orders for a general insurrection (May).

Once more, however, Government was too prompt, and the leaders were seized. Among them was Lord Edward Fitzgerald, son of the premier peer of Ireland, one of the noblest of those generous-minded and reckless visionaries of whom Ireland has been so prolific ; like his comrades, and like the leaders of the Revolution in France, he was blinded by a vague ideal to the sordid horrors of internecine strife, into which he had helped to plunge his country. These arrests destroyed any chance there might have been that the rebellion would be formidable. It was only in the south-east of Leinster that it was at all dangerous, and only in Wexford that it attained even a momentary success. Here a mob of ignorant and terrified peasants for a time dominated the countryside, burning and slaying. Their success was short-lived ; troops were poured in from England, yeomanry were rushed down from Ulster, and in June, at Vinegar Hill, the hapless and bewildered rebel host was scattered and decimated. Then followed an ugly spell of savage repression ; but by August all resistance was at an end. Ireland relapsed into a sullen quiescence.

When all was over, and they could achieve nothing, two French forces at last reached Ireland, a little army of 1000

men landing at Killala, on the wild west coast, in August ; a fleet with 5000 men reaching Lough Swilly in September. Both were easily disposed of. With the second came Wolfe Tone, who was captured and condemned to death, but anticipated his fate by suicide.

So ended the most grim and sordid tragedy in even the terrible records of Irish history. It had brought cruel sufferings upon the Irish people ; but the worst of all its results were the bitter memories and hatreds which it aroused. They were to poison the life of Ireland for a century to come ; and they were the more bitter because they had been stirred at a time when Ireland seemed to be on the verge of becoming at last a united nation, and a reconciled member of the Commonwealth. The blame for this unhappy result rests in part upon the reactionary party in Ireland, in part upon the vacillations of Pitt ; but the chief blame must be laid upon the revolutionary spirit, with its appeal to violence, with its wilful destruction of the forces that were working for reconciliation, with its reckless stirring of old hatreds in order that they might be used for its own ends. In other lands, the French Revolution wrought blended good and ill ; in Ireland, nothing but ill.

§ 4. *The Act of Union.*

The rebellion was at an end : but the task of healing and settlement remained, and the fierce passions which had been aroused made it an all but impossible task. There was now no hope that the Irish Parliament would admit the Catholics to an equality of treatment, for all the old fears and hatreds of 1690 had been reawakened. But to leave the Catholics at the mercy of the Protestant ascendancy was equally out of the question. In the view of most British statesmen the only solution was a legislative union, such as they had long desired, but never had an opportunity of carrying. This view was strongly held not only by Pitt, but by the wise old statesman Cornwallis, who had been appointed Lord-Lieutenant when the rebellion began, and by the young statesman Castlereagh, who was, as Chief Secretary, beginning his brilliant career. But both Cornwallis and Castlereagh were convinced that a Union would only be possible or defensible if it were associated, as part of the settlement, with a measure of complete Catholic emancipation. This would reconcile the Catholics, and make them feel that Union had brought them a boon which

they could not otherwise have obtained. Pitt refused to permit emancipation to be linked with the Union ; but he allowed it to be understood that it would be the first undertaking of the united Parliament. On that understanding the project of Union received, if not the active support, at any rate the concurrence, of a large proportion of the Catholics.

But the Catholics were not represented in the Irish Parliament ; and the Irish Parliament had to be persuaded to consent to its own extinction. The project of Union was as bitterly opposed by reformers of Grattan's school as by the oligarchy of borough-owners. There was only one way in which it could be forced through—by organised corruption ; and even corruption on the most lavish scale scarcely availed. £1,200,000 were spent in the purchase of pocket boroughs ; peerages and places were scattered with profusion. ' I despise and hate myself every hour, for engaging in such dirty work,' Cornwallis wrote, ' and am supported only by the reflection that without a Union the British Empire must be dissolved.' Corruption did its work ; it swamped even the moving and lofty eloquence of Grattan, who saw the work of his life undone ; and the Irish Parliament came to an end.

The Act of Union was a well-meant measure. It gave Ireland generous representation in the United Parliament, 102 members in the House of Commons, 45 peers in the House of Lords ; and at the moment its financial adjustments between the two countries were not ungenerous, though in the long run they proved to be unfair to the smaller country. But it imposed upon Ireland the sacrifice of what even the unrepresented Catholics regarded as the symbol of Irish nationhood. That sacrifice could only be justified if the price paid for it was a worthy price. The price which had been offered was Catholic emancipation, and the healing of the ancient religious conflict. But it was not paid.

George III. had convinced himself that he could not assent to Catholic emancipation without violating his coronation oath. It is incredible that Pitt should not have known this was the King's attitude, or even made inquiries, before he gave the understanding which was as binding in honour as the most solemn pledge. Yet he accepted the King's negative without a struggle, on the ground that George's mental balance was precarious—as if the reconciliation of two sister nations, and the fulfilment

of an honourable undertaking, were not more important than even the sanity of a king. Pitt resigned his post, to save his personal honour ; but he secured the possibility of a return to office by giving a voluntary pledge that he would not raise the question during the King's lifetime. This is the deepest of the blots on Pitt's reputation as a statesman. For the history of the united Parliament began with a broken pledge ; the symbol of Irish nationhood had been sacrificed, and the price had not been paid ; the Irish people (with the Fitzwilliam episode in their memories) had once more been convinced that the promises of a British Government could not be trusted. It was under these unhappy auspices that the great experiment of the Union was undertaken.

[Lecky, *History of Ireland in the 18th Century*, the best, most solid, and most judicial of Lecky's books ; also his *Leaders of Irish Public Opinion* : Dunlop, *Henry Grattan* ; Swift Macneill, *Constitutional and Parliamentary History of Ireland till the Union* ; Moore, *Memoirs of Lord E. Fitzgerald* ; Gordon, *History of the Irish Rebellion* ; *Autobiography of Wolfe Tone* : Escande, *Hoche en Irlande*.]

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL EFFECTS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

§ 1. *Rapid Progress of the Agrarian Revolution.*

GREAT wars always deeply affect the social organisation of the peoples who engage in them ; but few wars that have ever been waged can have exercised a more potent or a more unhappy influence upon the social condition of a country than the French Revolutionary War exercised upon the social condition of Britain. Coming at a moment when a vast economic transformation was at work, it intensified the sufferings which this transformation was bound to cause ; it distracted men's minds from the need for remedial measures ; and it plunged a large proportion of the population into such an abyss of misery that for a generation after the conclusion of peace violent revolution, dictated by despair, seemed always to be at hand. The full effects of the war were not displayed until its second phase, when Napoleon used his power over Europe to attempt the total ruin of Britain by excluding her trade from European markets. But already, before 1801, the chief sources of difficulty were being made plain.

The outstanding fact of Britain's situation when she entered upon the most gigantic conflict in which she had ever engaged was that, for the first time in her history, she was unable to support her population from the produce of her own soil. No other great State had ever found itself in such a situation. This was due to the rapid growth of population. Between 1700 and 1750 the population of England and Wales had risen from about 5,000,000 to about 6,000,000, an increase of 20 per cent. ; between 1750 and 1801 it rose from about 6,000,000 to about 9,000,000, an increase of 50 per cent. For this growing population home supplies were insufficient, and from about 1773 imports of foreign corn were generally necessary. In the first half of the century Britain had been a corn-exporting country ; by the end of the century something like 20 per

cent. of her total requirements had to be imported. These imports had to come from Europe—mainly from the Baltic, for the new world had not yet begun to feed the old ; and the war put difficulties in the way of importation. In years when the home harvests failed, as in 1795 and 1797, there was a shortage of food, almost approaching to famine. The price of corn steadily mounted, even in normal years ; and by the end of the century a loaf of bread cost three times as much as it had cost fifty years before. This rise in the price of the prime necessities of life was cruelly felt by the mass of the people ; for though wages also rose, they did not rise in proportion to the cost of living.

In these circumstances it was essential that every possible means should be adopted of stimulating home production. In 1791 an attempt was made to encourage the farmer by means of a Corn Law, which practically prohibited importation when the home price was below 50s. a quarter ; but as the home price never sank to anything like so low a figure as 50s., the Act had no effect, and it certainly did nothing to raise the price of corn. Indeed, in 1795 Government was actually offering bounties on the importation of foreign corn, so grave was the shortage. The Corn Laws were, in fact, useless during this period. A far more important means of increasing production was the stimulation of scientific farming. From 1793 a semi-official Board of Agriculture, with Arthur Young as its secretary, was doing everything in its power to encourage the farmers to employ more intensive methods. But the old open-field system, and the wide extent of uncultivated commons, stood in the way ; as late as 1801, in spite of the activity of the previous generation in enclosures,¹ the old system still survived in half the parishes of England. In that year, therefore, a general Enclosure Act was passed, to facilitate and cheapen the process, which went on thenceforward with accelerating speed.

Thus the agrarian revolution was forced on by the war. Beyond a doubt, these changes led to a great increase in home production, which was enabled to keep pace with the increase of population ; and perhaps this alone prevented Britain from being starved into surrender during the later stages of the war. But the social results of the change were anything but good. The skilful farmer, indeed, profited enormously ; the landlord's rents rapidly increased ; and these classes had every reason to be satisfied. But the small-holder, who had little or no capital and no exceptional

¹ See above, pp. 116-118.

skill or enterprise, found it impossible to hold his own after enclosure, and nearly always had to sell his land to his big neighbour. With terrible rapidity the mass of the rural population of Britain was reduced to the position of a proletariat, having no means of livelihood but the sale of their labour. Agricultural wages rose, indeed, by about 40 per cent. between 1790 and 1804; but the price of bread rose 60 per cent. in the same period, and every commodity of common use rose in proportion. What was worse, the labourer was losing the means of supplementing his wages which he had once enjoyed. Enclosure deprived him of the right of turning a pig on to the commons; while the factories of the North were depriving his wife and daughters of the chance of adding to the family income by spinning yarn for the weavers. With a dreadful swiftness the widely diffused comfort which had marked English rural life in the middle of the century disappeared; and the English peasant, who had enjoyed a solid diet with plenty of meat and ale, was reduced to bread and tea. Often enough he could not obtain milk for his children. And even so, he could not make ends meet; however hard he might work, mere necessity often drove him to accept poor relief.

§ 2. *The Poor Law and the Game Laws.*

The governing class, which was profiting by the change that was so ruinous to the labourers, was not indifferent to these sufferings. There was a great outpouring of charity, and bounty to the village poor became an accepted duty of the ladies in every manor house. But charity is no substitute for justice; it set up a false relationship between two classes of the community, and ultimately deepened the cleavage between them. The Whig, Samuel Whitbread, proposed in Parliament, in 1795, that a minimum wage should be fixed, varying with the cost of living; but orthodox economic theory would have nothing to say to this device. Lord Winchilsea, and the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor (founded in 1795), urged that every labourer ought to be given an allotment; but theirs were voices in the wilderness. Even the agricultural reformers, notably Arthur Young, began to wonder whether they had not been too sweeping in their advocacy of large farms, and to press for small holdings; but the movement was too strong to be checked.

The only important attempt which was made to relieve

the distress of the agricultural labourer was the adoption of a new poor law policy ; and this, though it was inspired by the most humane motives, did nothing but harm. In 1795 the Berkshire Justices of the Peace, meeting at Speenhamland, decided that in all cases where a labourer's wage was insufficient to provide an adequate subsistence for his family, they would add to it from the rates in proportion to the number of children in the family. Similar devices had been tentatively adopted elsewhere ; but the Berkshire scheme was so carefully worked out that it was widely adopted. It became so nearly universal in the next generation that it came to be known as the Speenhamland Act of Parliament ; and in 1796 its main idea was embodied in a real Act of Parliament. The result was that, by 1802, 28 per cent. of the population were in receipt of poor relief.

The Berkshire magistrates meant well, but their scheme, like other instances of misdirected benevolence, produced results far more mischievous than the most ingenious and ruthless tyranny could have devised. They were destroying the farmer's motive for paying a living wage, since whatever he paid would be made up out of the rates. They were imposing a crushing burden upon the ratepayers, and, with cruel irony, were compelling the small-holder to contribute through the rates towards the wages-bill of his powerful competitors, and thus hastening his ruin. They were depriving the labourer of his self-respect ; however industrious and thrifty he might be, he must submit to the degradation of charitable relief ; and if he tried to do without it, he was punished by starvation. They were encouraging early and improvident marriages and the rapid increase of a pauperised population.

But the worst of all the results of this terrible system was that it reduced a large part of the working population to a sort of slavery. Under an Act of 1782 (known as Gilbert's Act) Guardians of the Poor were empowered to find work for unemployed men ; and a practice grew up whereby gangs of paupers, men, women and children, were hired out to private employers, who paid a very low wage, the balance necessary for bare subsistence being made up from the rates. And out of this system, combined with the power of binding pauper children as apprentices, there grew up a practice yet more abominable, whereby children were sent in thousands, often at a very tender age, to the factories of the North, there to labour, uncared-for, during long hours : pitiful little friendless slaves, torn from their poor homes.

Wherever it was fully applied, the Speenhamland system reduced the labouring population to misery and degradation, robbed them of their self-respect, and gravely undermined their physical vitality. But these results were only gradually made apparent ; and in some parts of the country the system never came into operation. Indeed it was not until the last years of the long war and the first years of the peace that its evils were fully displayed. If the development of the system had not been gradual, it is incredible that there would not have been more lively protest. But familiarity can reconcile men to terrible things. It reconciled the men of the heroic age of Nelson and Wellington to a state of things in which the British peasantry—the fathers and mothers of the men who fought at Trafalgar and Waterloo—were being reduced to a condition of misery comparable with that of the negro slave in the West Indies ; while the upper and middle classes were enjoying an abounding prosperity. The old homogeneity of English rural society had vanished. Between the fortunate few and the wretched many there was now no community of interest. The few, though they did not realise the fact, thrived upon the misery of the many ; and, being obsessed by the dread of revolution, they were more concerned to stifle the expression of discontent than to remove its causes.

Nothing more clearly shows the abyss which was opening between the possessing class and the labouring class in English rural society than the extraordinary severity of the Game Laws. The English squirearchy had always been fond of sport, and had long visited with disproportionate severity the offence of poaching their game. While the peasantry were still reasonably well off this had mattered comparatively little. But now, with purses swollen by war-profits, the gentry were beginning to take their sports very seriously ; they were breeding and preserving game, introducing pheasants, maintaining large numbers of keepers. The half-starved labourer was not only driven to contrast the treatment of his own family with the treatment of game and those who tended it, he had a real temptation flaunted before his penury. Poaching inevitably grew. It was one of the means whereby the labourer kept himself alive ; it added a spark of interest and adventure to his life of starvation and drudgery ; he would have been a poor-spirited creature if he had regarded it as a crime.

But the rapid increase of poaching alarmed the governing class. In 1770 Parliament had imposed a penalty of three

months' imprisonment for taking game between sunset and sunrise, with flogging and a longer spell of gaol for a second offence. In 1800 imprisonment with hard labour was made the penalty for being found with one or more companions in circumstances that suggested poaching. The only result of this severity was that poachers began to work in armed gangs, so as to be able to resist capture, and battles between poachers and keepers became a common feature of English country life. In 1803 the penalty of death was provided for even a threat of resistance in arms. Henceforward there was a state of simmering war in the English countryside; and the country gentlemen and the Justices of the Peace had come to appear no longer the protectors of the poor, but their enemies and oppressors.

The brutality of the Game Laws, like the ruinous cruelty of the Poor Law System, had not reached its worst during the period with which we are now concerned. But it was bad enough, when the nineteenth century opened, to show how bitter and how deep was the social cleavage which had resulted from the agrarian revolution, complicated by the stress of the war, and by the exaggerated dread of revolution to which it gave birth.

§ 3. *Effects of the War upon Industry.*

In the manufacturing industries, even more than in agriculture, it was not until the second stage of the war that the unhappy influence which it exercised upon the economic transformation was fully displayed. In some industries, indeed, war brought, as it always does, a factitious prosperity. In the textile trades, where the industrial revolution had begun, no very perceptible worsening of conditions took place before the turn of the century. Machine-power was still almost limited to the spinning side of these trades. The weavers, still working at hand-loom in their own cottages, had not yet exhausted the boom of prosperity which an increased supply of yarn had brought to them, and their 'golden age' lasted into the nineteenth century.

Yet already there were signs that war conditions were hostile to a reasonable adjustment of industrial life to its new methods. For one thing, the war, and the hesitation about making political changes to which it gave rise, prevented any attempt to provide decent organisation or government for the new towns which were springing up in the North and the Midlands. Villages were growing into

towns with mushroom rapidity. They had to be content with the traditional village organisation, under manor courts and parish vestries, which were hopelessly unsuited for their new functions ; and the result was that they grew up without regulation, ugly, insanitary, unlighted, unpaved, unpoliced. This state of things, which was due to the political stagnation and the resistance to all change caused by reaction against the Revolution, lasted for half a generation after the war had reached its close. Many British towns are still struggling with the unhealthy conditions produced during this period. The new generation of industrial Britain was sentenced to be bred in inconceivably ugly and degrading surroundings.

Again, wages in many industries showed a downward tendency, or at least failed to rise in proportion to the alarming increase in the cost of living. This was directly traceable to the war, and need not have happened in normal conditions. For the war prevented that rapid expansion of foreign markets which was necessary if the new methods of mechanical production were to be developed without inflicting suffering upon the workers ; and at the same time the growing distress of the agricultural population led to a shrinkage of the home market. If the farm-labourer had been better paid, he would have had more to spend on woollen and cotton goods. In another way, also, the degradation of the agricultural labourer affected the industrial worker. At the end of the century surplus labour from the country was beginning to pour into the towns and mining villages ; and this competition enabled employers to beat down wages, especially as the farm labourer was accustomed to very low wage-rates. Finally, child-labour could be utilised on a large scale in the spinning factories. Its employment inevitably kept down wage-rates. And the enormity of child-labour in factories was already assuming monstrous dimensions, thanks to the wholesale apprenticing of pauper children. It had gone so far by 1802 that Sir Robert Peel, himself a great cotton manufacturer, obtained from Parliament an Act to regulate the conditions of work of poor-law apprentices in cotton factories. This was the first of the long series of Factory Acts. But it had no effect, because its execution was left to the Justices of the Peace, who knew nothing about the business.

Although, therefore, the conditions in the manufacturing industries were not yet very bad, the operatives were

beginning to feel the need of protection for the maintenance of their standard of life. There were repeated requests to Government, from one trade or another, for some system of wage-regulation by authority, such as had been applied, with some success, among the Spitalfields silk-weavers in 1773; there were also demands for the definition of a minimum wage; there were appeals to the Justices of the Peace to use their powers of fixing wages, which had long fallen into desuetude. But the Justices of the Peace were quite incompetent to deal with the complex piece-rates of the new industry. And the orthodox economics of the time looked askance at any such interference. Nothing, therefore, was done. The industrial workers, beginning to be distressed, were turning to the State for protection and aid; and the State was refusing to give it.

Since the State would do nothing, the only resource seemed to lie in combination for mutual aid; and indeed freedom to combine might have seemed a logical corollary of the refusal of the State to take action. Embryonic organisations for mutual aid began to spring into being in large numbers. On the one hand these years saw the establishment of a multitude of small friendly societies which did not meddle with industrial questions, but provided sick-benefit and other advantages to their members. On the other hand many small trade clubs, or rudimentary Trade Unions, purely local in character, came into being; and in many cases proved to be of real use in bargaining with employers. Government adopted very different attitudes towards these two types of organisations. It welcomed and assisted the friendly societies, by passing a Friendly Societies Act in 1793. Trade clubs, on the other hand, were regarded as mischievous and dangerous, because they tried to interfere with the wages and conditions of labour. They were held, also, to have a dangerously revolutionary character: they might enable the servant to dictate to his master; they might be used for political purposes. In 1799, therefore, Pitt introduced into Parliament an Anti-Combination Act, which absolutely prohibited all combinations to deal with wages, and imposed severe penalties. Earlier Acts had prohibited combination in a particular industry, but always in conjunction with some provision for the protection of the workers. This Act—which was passed practically without discussion—applied to all industries, and included no provisions for the protection of the workers. In the next year (1800) a second

Act, which stiffened the provisions of the first, included a clause authorising arbitration in industrial disputes, but the clause remained a dead letter, the employers refused to work it, and, indeed, arbitration was out of the question when the parties to the dispute were forbidden to act in combination.

Thus the State refused to do anything for the protection of the workers in a time of trial, and at the same time prohibited them from combining to protect themselves. It was in these conditions that the operatives had to face the terrible strain and suffering of the second stage of the war. The Combination Acts did not put an end to Trade Unions, but they drove them underground, gave them a conspiratorial character, and made it impossible for them to deal frankly and openly with the employers. If the first period of the war did not produce, among the industrial workers, as acute distress as among the agricultural labourers, it helped to create the conditions which were to produce the sufferings of the next period.

§ 4 *Religious and Humanitarian Movements*

But the social results of the war were not all evil. The grimness and danger of the times made men take life more seriously. This showed itself on the one hand in an increased simplicity of dress and manners, it showed itself also in an increased earnestness of religious life, and in an intense philanthropy. The great religious revival whose beginnings we have traced in the previous period¹ reached its height in the dark days of the war, and it was accompanied by a remarkable and varied humanitarian activity. Except in a few dissolute sets, like that which surrounded the Prince Regent, there was a revival of something like the stern Puritanism of the seventeenth century. The Evangelical Movement had become one of the most powerful factors in the life of Britain, and the little group of wealthy and influential Evangelicals who clustered round William Wilberforce at Clapham, and were known as the Clapham Sect, exercised a high degree of political authority, and were able to achieve great things. Sober, self-complacent and narrow-minded, they were also full of a sincere zeal for good causes.

Space does not permit of any description of the multifarious philanthropic activities of the time, the hospitals,

¹ See above, pp 131-133.

the dispensaries, the schools, the institutions for the afflicted of all kinds, which were springing up in every part of Britain. In view of the deepening shadow of misery which was darkening the lives of the mass of British people, these efforts were apt to appear futile and ineffective ; yet they nurtured a spirit which was to help towards better things in the future. But there were two of the religious and humanitarian undertakings of the war period which deserve more than a passing mention. One was the great campaign against the slave-trade, in which Wilberforce and his Clapham friends were deeply concerned. It won its triumph in 1807, when an Act of Parliament made the traffic in slaves illegal for British subjects. And when it is remembered how vast had been the wealth earned by this nefarious traffic, and how grave were the anxieties which beset British commerce in these years, the victory of this campaign of abnegation provides a heartening proof that human sympathy and pity were not dead in Britain, despite all the cruelties of the time. The abolition of the slave-trade struck the note of a new era in the history of the British Commonwealth, an era in which ruthless exploitation of primitive peoples would be no longer regarded as permissible.

Even more important, both in itself and in the influence which it was to exercise upon the future development of the Commonwealth, was the beginning of the immense and wide-ranging activities of Christian missionaries which belongs to these years. It was in 1792 that William Carey, the learned Baptist cobbler, published his plea for the conversion of the heathen which gave the first impetus to this vast movement. Next year Carey went out to India, and began a work which was to have the most profound effects not only upon the religious life of India, but still more upon its intellectual outlook.¹ The Baptist Missionary Society, founded as a result of Carey's zeal, was followed in 1795 by the London Missionary Society, which in the next year despatched 29 missionaries to the Pacific, and by the Scottish Missionary Society, which took Africa for its first field. In 1799 the Church Missionary Society began its work ; and in 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society. All were supported by voluntary subscriptions in Britain. The world-wide activities which were thus begun not merely showed that there was real vitality in the religious and humanitarian movements of the time ; they were to have

¹ See below, Bk. IX. chap. iv. p. 351.

a profound influence upon the future development of the British Commonwealth, and many pages of this volume will have to be devoted to tracing their political consequences. For it was the influence of the missionaries which was to establish the principle that, in the backward regions of the world, it was the duty of the British power to prevent the ruthless exploitation of primitive peoples, and to lead them gently into civilised ways of life. And the application of this principle in many fields was to be one of the highest achievements of British statesmanship during the nineteenth century, which opened with the foundation of the great missionary organisations.

§ 5. *The Romantic Revival.*

A yet greater glory than the zeal of humanitarian endeavour lightened these dark days of war. The muses of poetry had again fixed their abode in Britain; and the greatest outburst of inspired song that England had known since the time of Shakespeare was beginning—evoked, beyond a doubt, by the deep emotions and reflections which were born of the revolution and the war. The smooth complacency of the eighteenth century, its certainty that all the mysteries of life lay within the compass of human reason, were shrivelled up by the fierce passions of the time, and by the challenge which it gave to every received idea and accepted convention. Wonder, reverence and humbleness were born again in a reeling world; and those profound emotions were stirred from which great poetry springs—compassion for the sufferings and valour of common men, admiration for the deeds of heroes, the thrill of a great dim hope for the future of humanity, the pride of country and the love of liberty. Even the quiet beauties of the countryside, and the customary kindliness of daily life, took on a fresh poignancy when they seemed to be threatened by the grim menace of war; the beauty of nature and the mystery of life were seen with a sharper vision.

The new inspiration of the age had begun to show itself even before the outbreak of the Revolution: Blake's simple and sublime *Songs of Innocence* were published in 1789; the slim Kilmarnock volume of Burns's *Poems* appeared in 1786. But both poets were deeply affected by the great upheaval: its influence surely had something to do with the cloudy grandeur of Blake's prophetic writings, which were published during the years of war; and Burns, who

died in 1796, wrote many of his later songs under the influence of its first inspiration. Yet more direct was the effect of the revolutionary spirit upon the two great poets who were the highest glory of the age, Wordsworth and Coleridge. They were still under the emotional influence of the new gospel of humanity when they published *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798; both of them were later to be as powerfully inspired by indignation against the tyranny of Napoleon. The genius of both was at its highest during the second phase of the war; and Wordsworth's patriotic sonnets were the noblest expression of the spirit in which Britain braced herself to resist the tyrant of Europe. The four names of Blake, Burns, Wordsworth and Coleridge would be enough by themselves to make an age famous. But they were the harbingers of an extraordinary outburst of imaginative literature. Landor, Southey and Campbell were already at their best during the years of war. Scott published the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* in 1805, and all his poetical work belongs to the war period. Byron's dazzling career was soon to begin—*Childe Harold* was published in 1812; and the ethereal genius of Shelley made itself known with the issue of *Queen Mab* in 1813. The novel, too, took a new birth: the Irish tales of Maria Edgeworth and the fine irony of Jane Austen led the way to the great sequence of the Waverley Novels, which began in 1814. And in essays and criticism no period in the whole range of English literature can surpass the years which were illuminated by the work of Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt and De Quincey. As truly as the Elizabethan age, the age of the Revolution, and especially its second half, produced a splendour of thought and imagination that matched the splendour of its deeds.

[J. L. and B. Hammond, *The Village Labourer, The Town Labourer, The Skilled Labourer*; Prothero, *English Farming, Past and Present*; Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*; Hasbach, *History of the English Agricultural Labourer*; Johnson, *The Disappearance of the Small Landowner*; Gonner, *Common Land and Inclosure*; Slater, *English Peasantry and the Inclosure of the Common Fields*; Nicholls, *History of the Poor Law*; Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*; S. and R. Wilberforce, *Life of W. Wilberforce*; Dowden, *The French Revolution and English Literature*.]

CHAPTER VII

THE NAPOLEONIC EMPIRE AND BRITISH SEA-POWER: TRAFALGAR, AUSTERLITZ, AND JENA

THE strain and suffering caused by the first, or revolutionary, phase of the great war had been serious enough; but they were insignificant in comparison with the miseries which flowed from the second, or Napoleonic, phase, which was wholly due to the insatiable ambition of the most tremendous military and organising genius whom the world has ever known. 'I am not a man, but a force,' Napoleon once said of himself. With volcanic energy he was now to sweep away, in the course of a few years, every obstacle which withstood him upon the mainland of Europe, as he strode towards the domination of the world. Only one barrier held against his onset, and saved the world from an all-embracing military despotism. This ultimate bulwark of freedom was the sea-power of Britain, who, in Pitt's words, 'saved herself by her exertions,' and after long endurance was to 'save Europe by her example.' But the long agony of the struggle racked and strained the very structure of the Commonwealth, almost brought it to ruin, and left it, when victory was won, faced by problems of reconstruction so grave that for a whole generation anarchy and ruin seemed always to be at hand.

§ I. *The Organisation of Napoleon's Power.*

1. Napoleon had made himself the master of France by the coup d'état of November 1799. Before the end of the year his government was defined by a new constitution, known as the Constitution of the Year VIII., which was submitted to a plebiscite vote of the French nation, and accepted by an overwhelming majority. Avoiding a semblance of a return to monarchy, the constitution set at the head of the State three Consuls, who were to hold office for ten years. But Napoleon as First Consul wielded the whole executive power, and could appoint and dismiss all public officials. There was an elaborate apparatus of consultative and

legislative bodies, a Council of State, a Senate, a Tribunate, a Legislative Assembly ; but these bodies were allowed no real power. And in the sphere of local administration all authority was concentrated in the Prefects and Sub-Prefects—bureaucratic officials appointed by the central Government. Thus, within ten years of the beginning of the Revolution, France had swayed back again to a system of government almost as despotic in form, and far more absolute in fact, than that of the Bourbon monarchy had been. The dream of Democracy had vanished.

Even the great powers vested in the First Consul by the constitution of 1799 did not satisfy Napoleon's lust for domination. Every stage in his subsequent progress was marked by a weakening of the checks upon his absolute authority, unreal as they were. In 1802, he used the enthusiasm created by the conclusion of peace to obtain the approval of the nation, through another plebiscite, for his assumption of the Consulate for life. In 1804, amid the excitement of renewed war, a new plebiscite ratified his adoption of the title of Emperor, which was made hereditary. During the greater part of his period of power, Napoleon's rule was an undisguised despotism. It was a despotism which rested on national consent, as repeated plebiscites proved. But its main buttress was the devoted loyalty of a huge army, proud of its victories ; and this fundamental fact made it a menace to the world. Even if the despot himself had not been avid of power, the army must be fed with conquests.

The Napoleonic régime, whatever its author might pretend, was thus a negation of all the dreams of political liberty which had given birth to the Revolution. It was equally hostile to freedom of thought, at least in the political sphere. A fortnight after the publication of the Constitution of 1799 the autocrat suppressed, by a single edict, 60 of the 73 newspapers issued in Paris, and forbade the publication of any new ones. Henceforward the press was subject to a rigid and highly efficient censorship ; and the theatres were submitted to as strict a control as the press. In a series of laws and edicts between 1802 and 1808, Napoleon undertook the regulation of the educational system, bringing it under the centralised control of what he called the *Université de France*, a huge corporation under the almost absolute direction of a Grand Master, who was appointed and dismissed by the Emperor. The supreme object of the system was to drill the whole nation to think

alike, at the orders of its master. This was the shrewdest and most penetrating of his attacks upon liberty. Finally the fabric of despotism was cemented by an elaborately organised system of secret police, perfected from the methods of the Reign of Terror, and directed by the astute Fouché, an inheritance from those days. In the later days of the Napoleonic régime the arbitrary imprisonment of dangerous persons practically reproduced the *lettres de cachet* of the Old Régime.

Thus her great Revolution had brought France to a system of despotism, and to a negation of liberty, far more severe because far more efficient than the Old Régime had ever known. She had come to this because she had pursued liberty by the path of violence rather than by the path of persuasion and consent. And she accepted the result because she was sick of anarchy, and the new régime gave her, at the least, order, stability and internal peace. There is no question but that the Napoleonic despotism was immeasurably the most efficient government that France had ever known. For a time it almost healed the discords to which the Revolution had given birth. The quarrel with the Catholic Church, which had lasted since 1790, was ended by a Concordat with the Papacy in 1801, and in 1804 the Pope (very reluctantly) came to France to crown Napoleon Emperor—or rather, to be present at the coronation, for Napoleon placed the crown on his own head. France gained also very greatly from the codification of the laws which Napoleon, using the work of the revolutionary jurists, pushed through with astonishing rapidity. The five Codes which were drawn up between 1800 and 1810 formed the clearest and most orderly system of law which any country had enjoyed since the fall of the Roman Empire; their merits were so shining that they greatly helped in establishing French influence and authority in the conquered countries. Napoleon was a despot; but he was the most intelligent and enlightened despot of whom history has any record.

The swiftness, competence and skill with which France was reorganised during the years following 1799 form the most triumphant and conclusive proof of Napoleon's genius; his achievements as a ruler were even more dazzling than his achievements as a captain in war. But their result was to leave all the resources of the greatest country in Europe absolutely at the mercy of a man of insatiable ambition; and thus to threaten the liberty of the whole world.

The full significance of Napoleon's despotism was shown

in the lands which France had conquered even more clearly than in France herself.¹ Belgium, the whole of Germany west of the Rhine, and the province of Savoy had been completely incorporated in France during the republican period. In 1802 the province of Piedmont—the north-western part of the North Italian plain—was also forcibly annexed to France. The two republics which had been established in Northern Italy were both ordered to accept new constitutions, modelled on the new system in France. Soon followed the establishment of a Kingdom of Italy, attached to the French Empire; and in 1805 Napoleon assumed the Iron Crown of Italy in the Cathedral of Milan.

But still more alarming was the despot's behaviour in Holland and in Switzerland. Holland was ordered (1801) to accept a new dictated constitution modelled on that of France. In Switzerland Napoleon played cunningly upon the division of parties; and when the new constitution which he dictated (1802) was resisted, he sent in an army of 30,000 men to 'crush all opposition.' These high-handed and outrageous actions were taking place during the Peace of Amiens. The independence of Holland, and the independence and neutrality of Switzerland, had been guaranteed by the Peace of Lunéville between France and Austria (1801); and, though they had not been definitely mentioned in the Peace of Amiens, the British Government naturally held that they were implied. The subjugation of Holland and Switzerland were among the main causes of the renewal of war. They proved that the hope that France was going to settle down as a peaceable member of the European society of nations was a false hope.

During the same years Napoleon was busying himself in the affairs of Germany. The new arrangements which he dictated in 1802 brought about a great simplification of German political geography;² a few strong States now stood forth in Western Germany, in place of the earlier chaos. But they were all dependents of Napoleon; he had laid the foundations of a new grouping of German States, which was to give him the mastery over Germany.

Meanwhile France was showing an unwonted activity in the colonial sphere. During the peace, an army and a small fleet were despatched to India, on the pretext of garrisoning Pondicherry and Chandernagore; but the obvious purpose of the expedition was to provide the nucleus for a new

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 11, 6th Edition Plate 69.

² See the maps, Atlas, 5th Edition, *Introd.*, p. 16.

attack on the British power. There were indications, also, that Napoleon intended to renew his attack on Egypt, which was visited, during the peace, by a French mission under Colonel Sebastiani. These events were naturally alarming to the British Government: in face of them it delayed the evacuation of Malta, which had been promised at the peace. Nor were events in the West less perturbing. As soon as peace was declared, Napoleon despatched an army of 25,000 men to reconquer the island of San Domingo, and to re-establish slavery there. The presence of a large French army in the West Indies was highly alarming to the British power. At the same time, by a bargain with Spain, Napoleon regained for France the vast lands of Louisiana, west of the Mississippi, which had been nominally Spanish since 1763. Evidently he was revolving great schemes of activity.

Thus on all hands, during the brief interval of peace, the dreadful menace of military despotism was visibly overshadowing the world. France, now more formidable than she had ever been in her history, was absolutely in the hands of a supremely able and ruthless man of limitless ambition. She had abandoned her dreams of liberty, and was submitting to be organised into a terribly efficient engine of conquest. Holland, Switzerland, and Northern Italy were dependent vassals, at the mercy of their master. Western Germany was rapidly being reduced to a similar state of dependence. Spain, nominally an equal ally, knew that she dared not resist the demands of the despot. Almost the whole resources of Western Europe were at Napoleon's disposal. Austria, recently defeated, was incapable of resistance. Prussia thought she drew profit from neutrality. Russia was, for the moment, in alliance with France. There was in all Europe no Power capable of resisting the conqueror. And meanwhile he was casting his keen eyes to East and to West across the seas, which had hitherto alone presented an impassable barrier. He hoped to use for his own purposes the young nation of the United States, where an ill-informed sympathy with the French Revolution combined with memories of the war of independence to play into his hands. If he could but have an interval of a few years in which to recreate the naval power of France, and establish military bases in the West Indies and in the Indian Ocean, the British Commonwealth, which formed the sole effective obstacle to the establishment of universal dominion, might be brought down in ruins.

§ 2. *British Politics and the War.*

The Peace of Amiens was concluded in March 1802. Just a year later, in March 1803, the British Government found it necessary to ask Parliament to take immediate steps for the protection of the country, in view of aggressive preparations which were being made in the ports of France and Holland. Government was in fact convinced that Napoleon intended a sudden attack, and that he was maintaining peace mainly as a cover for his preparations. Ever since September 1802 a special ambassador, Lord Whitworth, had been negotiating in Paris, complaining of the French aggressions in Italy, in Switzerland, in Holland. He could get no redress. The tenor of the French answers to these complaints was always the same: 'the Treaty of Amiens says nothing about Italy, Switzerland, and Holland: they are no concern of yours; but the treaty *does* provide that you shall evacuate Malta, and you have not evacuated it: evacuate Malta at once; there is no more to be said.' In form, Malta was the issue on which the war was renewed; and technically Britain was in the wrong. In fact the issue was far wider; and Britain had every justification for holding that Napoleon had outraged the spirit of the treaty of peace even if he had observed the letter, and that in view of this fact the retention of Malta was justified. In May, 1803, Whitworth left Paris after delivering an ultimatum. A few days later Napoleon ordered the arrest of the thousands of British subjects who had flocked to France under the shelter of peace.

In the desperate struggle which opened thus, Britain stood for a time alone. But she was a far more united nation than she had been during the previous war. There was none of that sympathy with the enemy which had been felt by a strong minority during the revolutionary period. The British people knew that they must fight for their national existence. They faced the issue not without dread, for the fear of invasion was real and strong; but they faced it without panic. Only in Ireland was there any movement of sympathy with the enemy. Here the gallant and romantic young student, Robert Emmet, whose brother had been one of the leaders of the United Irishmen in 1798, made in July 1803 a forlorn attempt at an insurrection in Dublin. Emmet seems to have been acting in collusion with Napoleon. But his followers only succeeded in murdering the Chief Justice and a few others, and their hopeless venture was

easily suppressed. Ireland remained quiet, and throughout the war supplied many recruits both for the army and for the navy.

Not only was the nation united, it was better prepared for self-defence than it had ever been before. The navy, upon which everything depended, was at the acme of its strength. It had Nelson for a fighting leader; and with Nelson that glorious 'band of brothers' whom only Nelson's splendour could reduce to second rank. And its administration was far more competent than it had been in the previous war; for Lord St. Vincent, the victor of 1797, was at the Admiralty, and he was soon to be succeeded by Lord Barham, an even greater naval administrator. Behind the shield of the navy stood almost the whole nation in arms, ill-drilled, indeed, but full of spirit. The militia had been embodied; the formation of companies of volunteers began in every part of the country immediately after the declaration of war; and in three months 300,000 volunteers had been enrolled, and were drilling hard, gentlemen and their grooms, lawyers, shopkeepers, and work-people, all inspired by a common resolution.¹

There was no doubt about the spirit and temper of the nation. But even the most united nation needs inspiring leadership. When the war began Government was in the hands of Addington, afterwards Lord Sidmouth, a second-rate respectable person, whom Pitt had recommended as his successor when he retired in 1801 on the Catholic Emancipation question. The abler young Tories, such as George Canning, had mostly followed Pitt; Addington's cabinet consisted mainly of dull reactionaries; apart from St. Vincent it included only two men of ability—the Chancellor, Lord Eldon, who was to be for nearly a generation the supreme example of stolid resistance to all change, and the young Lord Castlereagh, who was as yet an almost untried man; and it was generally felt that Addington's Government was wholly unfit to guide the nation through the coming ordeal. Many held that the unity of the nation ought to be reflected in a national Government; for there was now no difference between Whigs and Tories as to the necessity of waging the war with vigour.

But Addington showed no eagerness to give way; and Pitt's friends, who longed to see the great man back in

¹ Scott's *Antiquary* contains a stirring and humorous description of the volunteering enthusiasm of these years.

power, began to be venomous in their attacks upon the ministry. At length, in May 1804—a year after the opening of the war—Addington gave way, and Pitt became Prime Minister for the second time. He was anxious to make his ministry a national one, including Fox and the leading Whigs. But the King had not forgotten his personal detestation of Fox; Pitt could not override the royal objections; the Whigs, and even some of Pitt's old followers such as his cousin Lord Grenville, refused to serve if Fox were to be excluded. Hence Pitt was driven to form a weak ministry, which included scarcely any members of first-rate ability save himself. It was still further weakened when in May 1805 Pitt's most intimate colleague and close friend, Dundas (now Lord Melville), was impeached for financial irregularities in the administration of the navy during Pitt's earlier ministry, and compelled to resign. Melville was personally exonerated as a result of the inquiry. But the episode discredited the ministry and added to the burden of anxiety and responsibility which was already too great for Pitt's failing health. The strain was too much for him, and he died in January 1806, at a moment when the prospects of the war showed nothing but unrelieved gloom.

After Pitt's death a new attempt was made (February 1806) to form a national ministry. George III.'s objections to Fox were overridden; and with Grenville as Prime Minister a composite cabinet of Whigs and Tories was formed. But Fox's tenure of power, after so many years of opposition, was brief indeed. In September he followed his long-time rival to the grave. And the coalition was no more successful in carrying on the war than its predecessors; when it came to an end, Napoleon was practically master of Europe, and Britain was once more left in complete isolation. The credit of this ministry rests mainly upon the fact that it forced through Parliament an Act for the abolition of the slave-trade (1807) and, that it made an attempt to raise again the question of Catholic Emancipation. But this attempt threw the Tories into opposition, and brought about the defeat of the ministry. And hence it came about that the most desperate phase of the war, which began in 1806, was fought under exclusively Tory ministries.

It was thus under the direction of weak and distracted cabinets that Britain passed through the first stage of the war. Yet there is no reason to believe that this materially affected the course of events. The war in these years had two main aspects. The first of these was the complete

establishment of British supremacy on the seas, and the removal of all danger of invasion; and the weakness of Government did not prevent this. The second was the formation of a third coalition of European Powers to resist Napoleon, and its swift and dramatic downfall, which left Napoleon master of Europe; and nothing that Britain could do would have prevented this result. At the end of the conflict, in 1807, irresistible land-power faced irresistible sea-power in an apparent deadlock

§ 3. *The Project of Invasion and the Crowning Victory of Trafalgar.*

Napoleon's plan for ending the war was an invasion of England in force; and for that purpose, having no other enemies to deal with, he was able to concentrate on the coast, with its headquarters at Boulogne, the finest army that France, or indeed any European Power, had ever put into the field. At first he seems to have believed that the army might be rowed across the Narrows during a fog or a calm when the British fleet was unable to move. But by the end of 1803 he had realised the impracticability of this device. Apart from other difficulties, it would take six days for his flotilla to be manned and brought out of harbour; and it was scarcely probable that fog or calm would last long enough for this, or that the British fleet would be so complaisant as to leave the operation unimpeded. It was therefore necessary that the Narrows should be held, for a period of at least six days, by a superior naval force. During 1804 Napoleon's powerful and inventive brain was at work upon this problem

The French navy was scattered in a number of ports round the coast; the main squadron at Brest, the next largest at Toulon, and others at Rochefort, Lorient, and the Texel¹. And each of these squadrons was blockaded by a British fleet, not often superior in numbers, but always superior in discipline and efficiency. This tedious and wearing service occupied the attention of a large proportion of the British navy; it had to be carried on, with unrelaxed wakefulness, in all weathers; and there could not have been a more severe test of dogged patience. But the longer it lasted, the more complete became the ascendancy of the blockaders. For their seamanship was put to the hardest of tests, while their opponents, penned up in harbour, progressively lost

¹ For all this section see the maps, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 45, 6th Edition Plate 62

their 'sea-sense,' and were inevitably imbued with a feeling of their own inferiority to the forces from which they skulked in harbour.

Even the most competent blockade, however, could be evaded. It was impossible for the ships to stand close in-shore in all weathers. It was necessary for them at intervals to return to their own bases for supplies, or to be refitted. A watchful blockaded squadron could always find opportunities for evading the blockade if it thought fit to do so ; and, once it had escaped, the blockaders might guess in vain at its destination. This was what Napoleon counted upon. The essence of all the successive plans which he struck out during 1804 was the idea that one or more of the blockaded squadrons should give the slip to the blockaders, put them on a false track, then double back and relieve one of the other squadrons, and so appear suddenly and unexpectedly in the Narrows with overwhelming force.

All the plans of 1804, however, came to naught, until, in December, Spain was forced into the war against Britain, and her fleets became available for the great chess-game. There were Spanish squadrons in Carthage, Cadiz, and Ferrol.¹ The British navy, which (in European waters) was scarcely superior in number to the combined French and Spanish fleets, could not supply adequate squadrons to blockade all these ports ; and at the same time the number of alternative moves possible in the game of blockade-evasion was proportionately increased.

At the beginning of 1805 Napoleon's great project at last assumed its final shape. Two, or possibly three, of the blockaded squadrons were to escape simultaneously, one of them being the Toulon fleet, which was to be joined by a Spanish squadron from Cadiz. They were to make straight for the West Indies, because these islands formed so vitally important an element in the British trading system that any threat of attack on them was bound to bring British fleets scurrying in pursuit. It seemed safe to assume that the British fleets, once drawn out to the West Indies, would not readily suppose that the enemy had sailed so far only to go straight home again. In January 1805 the first attempt was made. The Toulon fleet got out while Nelson was watering his ships in Corsica ; but rough weather sent it back to port. Almost at the same time a small squadron got out from Rochefort and made its way to the West Indies ; but finding no colleagues there, it also returned,

¹ For what follows, see the maps, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 45, 6th Edition Plate 62.

after creating a panic in the British West Indian Islands. The failure of this attempt showed how difficult it was to time joint action by squadrons far separated from one another.

In March the Toulon fleet under Villeneuve once more ventured out, this time with better fortune. Nelson missed them ; and as he was short of scouting frigates, he spent a month in scouring the Mediterranean before he heard that Villeneuve had got through the Straits of Gibraltar, and had raised his force to eighteen ships of the line by making a junction with a Spanish squadron at Cadiz. Whither had he gone ? He might be bound for Ireland ; he might be gathering up the scattered squadrons for an onset in the Channel. But later news, and his intuition, convinced Nelson that the West Indies were the true destination. Trusting his own judgment, he set forth hotfoot, with his little fleet of ten ships, in pursuit of an enemy of nearly twice his strength, resolved to attack, if he could but overtake the enemy ; he might himself be crushed, but not until he had destroyed all chance of the enemy's fleet achieving anything of importance.

Villeneuve reached the West Indies early in May, and was preparing to attack Barbados when he heard of Nelson's arrival. At once he resolved to return to European waters, hoping that at any rate the terrible Nelson would be left behind. News came to Nelson that the French had been seen making for the open sea. But that might be false news, or it might only be a blind ; the authorities in the West Indies were convinced that it was a blind, and implored Nelson to stay and protect them. He, on the other hand, saw, as by a sudden revelation, the nature of Napoleon's great stratagem ; and sending his swiftest vessel home to warn the Admiralty, he set sail with his main squadron for Cadiz. His courier passed the French fleet in the Atlantic, and was able to bring home clear news of its whereabouts, which enabled the Admiralty to take the necessary precautions. Villeneuve safely reached Ferrol, and joined the small Spanish squadron in that port. But Nelson was back in European waters almost as soon ; and after reinforcing Collingwood, who was guarding the entrance to the Mediterranean, he made his way to the Channel, where he added the remainder of his squadron to Cornwallis's fleet off Brest, and returned to England for a well-earned rest. The mere fact of his return had baffled Napoleon's stratagem.

Yet the rush to the West Indies and back had not been

without result from Napoleon's point of view. At the least Villeneuve had now gathered together a large fleet—twenty ships of the line. If he could brush aside opposition, and sweep northwards to the jaws of the Channel, he might even yet be able, with the aid of the fleet in Brest, to overwhelm Cornwallis and hold the Narrows long enough to let the army of invasion step across. Off Ferrol, thanks to Nelson's warning, lay a fleet of sixteen sail under Sir Robert Calder. By Napoleon's orders Villeneuve, with his twenty, came out and offered battle. How Nelson would have welcomed such a chance! But Calder was a man of different kidney. He feared to be overwhelmed, and drew off, after an indecisive fight. Villeneuve on his side failed to take the heroic course of making a dash for the Channel, fell back upon Ferrol, and, a little later, being left undisturbed, sailed southwards to Cadiz (August), where he joined up with the Spanish squadron in that harbour, thus raising his total force to thirty-three ships of the line.

Napoleon's clever stratagem had been checkmated. And meanwhile the project of invasion had been perforce abandoned, for now Austria and Russia were in the field, and the army of England had to be withdrawn from its camp at Boulogne to deal with the new peril. But the main naval forces of France and Spain were now united in a single formidable fleet. It was not enough to have defeated the ingenious device of Napoleon; his fertile brain might still invent fresh stratagems. Before Britain's security could be made absolute the enemy fleets must be swept from the seas. And for that task there was one obvious commander marked out by destiny.

On September 28, having sailed from Portsmouth for the last time, Nelson, in the *Victory*, joined the British fleet off Cadiz, a fleet of twenty-seven sail of the line. He knew just how he intended to deal with the enemy when he should have lured him to battle; immediately after joining the fleet, he assembled his captains and explained to them the plan of battle upon which he had resolved. It was in all essentials the plan actually carried out more than three weeks later. Never was a leader more trusted and beloved than Nelson. The whole fleet thrilled with pride in his leadership. And all knew, with a certainty very rare among men, that they were privileged to play a part in one of the great events of history. All through the next days there was a sort of leisurely assured preparation for an absolutely certain event,

Why did Villeneuve come out at all from Cadiz harbour ? He had thirty-three ships against twenty-seven ; but his ships were ill-found and undermanned ; the sense of doom, the spell of Nelson's great name, were upon captains and men. None knew better than Villeneuve himself that he was destined to suffer defeat if he challenged battle. He was driven forth by the orders of Napoleon, who was ignorant of sea warfare, chafing under the knowledge that his plans had been shattered, and determined to get some fighting out of the fleets on which he had spent so much effort. On October 19, after three miserable weeks, Villeneuve came out of port and sailed towards the Straits of Gibraltar. Nelson, perfectly aware of his intentions, fell back before him, to let him get well out of port ; and it was in sight of the Rock that the last council of war was held.

Then, on October 21—a day which he had fixed upon beforehand—Nelson turned for the destruction of the enemy. It was a grey and cloudy morning, with some promise of the storm that broke later in the day, though only a light breeze blew from the north-west ; through the morning mist the Atlantic rollers could be seen breaking on the cliffs of Cape Trafalgar. The Franco-Spanish fleet was drawn up in a long curving line, with the horns pointing towards the British, who came on, under their mountains of white sails, in two columns, the right led by Collingwood, the left by Nelson himself. It took some hours for the columns to come up with the enemy ; Nelson had time to write a codicil to his will ; and to pen his final prayer, in which he asked that he should be granted a complete victory, and that the fleet should not misconduct itself. The bands played ; Nelson paced the deck of the *Victory* in a mood of exaltation. At eleven o'clock the great signal fluttered from the *Victory* : ' England expects every man to do his duty.' About noon, Collingwood's fifteen ships, now roughly in line abreast, were bearing down upon the last thirteen ships of the enemy's line, and for an interval Nelson watched with admiring envy the gallant onset of his comrade. Then, at 12.20, after feinting at the enemy's van, the *Victory*, at the head of its column of twelve ships, broke through the enemy line ten ships from the van ; thus severing the centre from the van. With the successful achievement of this manœuvre, the victory was in effect won. The rest of the battle was left to the individual initiative of the captains, who picked out each his victim ; and Trafalgar is distinguished among naval battles as much

by the brilliance with which this individual initiative was used as by the clarity and boldness of its main plan. At one o'clock the first French ship struck, and thereafter there was a steady succession of surrenders. One of the earliest fell to the *Victory*, which, leading the line, had to bear the brunt of the fighting. Just before this, Nelson was mortally wounded by a musket-ball fired from the rigging of the *Redoubtable*. He was carried below, but retained full consciousness for two hours, long enough to learn that a decisive victory had been won, and that fifteen enemy ships had surrendered. By five o'clock the last spasmodic firing had ended. Wild weather was rising; and fifteen of the enemy ships were allowed to escape in a shattered condition, because Collingwood failed, as Nelson would never have done, to order a pursuit. But eighteen of the enemy's fleet had been lost—one blown up, the rest captured; and four more were subsequently taken. So closed the greatest and the most decisive naval battle in history; and the wounded ships of the victorious fleet turned homewards to England, bearing with them the body of the nation's hero.

With Trafalgar every menace to the sea-power of Britain, and every possibility of an invasion of her shores, disappeared; however dazzling the triumphs of Napoleon might be, they stopped at the seashore.

§ 4. *The Third Coalition and its Downfall, 1805-1807.*

Land-power could not overcome sea-power; but neither could sea-power, by itself, overthrow land-power. It was only by means of a combination of European States that Napoleon could be checked. During the long-drawn naval fencing of 1803-1805 Pitt had been steadily at work, striving to build up a new European coalition. He found the readiest hearing in Russia, now under the rule of Alexander I., a magnanimous but somewhat unbalanced young prince, who somehow managed to combine a sentimental affection for the ideals of Rousseau with a strong conviction of the sanctity of monarchy, and saw in Napoleon the foe both of liberty and of legitimism. In April 1805, after protracted negotiations which had lasted for nearly a year, a secret alliance was concluded between Russia and Britain; and this was the foundation of the third coalition. Austria was persuaded to join the alliance by the action of Napoleon in Italy, when he was crowned King of Italy in May, 1805, and in June annexed the Ligurian Republic to France.

Sweden also joined; her king, Gustavus IV., was a sort of crusader for legitimist monarchy. And Britain undertook to supply the sinews of war, paying a subsidy of £1,250,000 for every 100,000 men raised by the allies. To complete the alliance it was only necessary that Prussia should join. But Prussia, who had taken no part in the war since 1795, was incapable of taking a broad view of the European situation, because all her thoughts were concentrated on her own immediate territorial interests. She hoped to get, as the price of neutrality, the kingdom of Hanover, which Napoleon had occupied immediately after the outbreak of war with Britain. Napoleon, though he had no exact knowledge of the negotiations which were building up the coalition against him, was very much on the alert. He knew that Prussia was the key of the situation; but he had a boundless contempt for this shifty and treacherous Power which he believed he could secure at any time by giving her 'a bone to gnaw.' The bone was held out in August 1805, at the moment when Napoleon realised that he was faced by a new European war. Hanover was offered in return for an alliance; and, though Prussia did not at once swallow the bait, it kept her quiescent during the critical campaign in the autumn of that year.¹

The alliance between Russia and Britain was concluded while Villeneuve and Nelson were in the West Indies. The coalition was completed just when Nelson's return to European waters had baffled Napoleon's scheme for the invasion of England. With the swift resolution which was the secret of his success, Napoleon changed his plans; and hurled the Grand Army—the finest which he had ever controlled, or was ever again to control—across Europe to shatter the Austrian menace before it could mature. The army was marching over South Germany when Nelson set out to join the fleet off Cadiz. Its rapidity of movement caught the Austrians unready; and on October 17, four days before Trafalgar, a large Austrian army was compelled to capitulate at Ulm. Driving home his advantage, Napoleon occupied Vienna itself (November); and on December 2, the first anniversary of his coronation as Emperor, he won, at Austerlitz in Moravia, the most dazzling of all his victories, over a combined Austrian and Russian army. In one short campaign the resistance of Austria was broken. Before the end of the year she was compelled to accept the Treaty of Pressburg, whereby she withdrew from the war, and ceded Venetia to France and the Tyrol to Bavaria.

¹ See the maps, Atlas, 6th Edition Plate 72 (a) and (b).

The results of this thunderbolt victory were immediately felt in all parts of Europe. Russia, though she did not make peace, withdrew within her own borders. A mixed Russian and British force which had been landed in Southern Italy was broken up by the withdrawal of the Russian troops, and Italy was left at Napoleon's mercy. A combined movement of Russian, Swedish and British forces, which was to have undertaken the reconquest of Hanover, was brought to an inglorious end. Prussia, which had been wavering, came down on Napoleon's side, agreed to exclude all British trade from her ports, and accepted Hanover as her reward.

Austerlitz left Napoleon so completely the master of Western Europe that he was able, during the early months of 1806, to remould the European system after his own desire. He annexed Venetia and Dalmatia to his kingdom of Italy. He sent an army to overrun the kingdom of Naples, and set his brother Joseph on its throne. He overthrew the nominally republican constitution of Holland, and made his brother Louis King of Holland. He showered principalities and duchies upon his leading marshals and statesmen. But above all he set himself to reconstruct the political system of Germany, and to bring it under his control. The Holy Roman Empire was abolished, after an existence of a thousand years since the coronation of Charlemagne; and in its place the new Charlemagne created the Confederation of the Rhine, with the French Emperor as its protector, and a Diet of kings and princes.¹ Apart from Austria and Prussia, practically the whole of Germany had now passed into a state of definite vassalage to France. The Confederation of the Rhine was pledged to permanent alliance with the French Empire, and bound to provide a contingent of 68,000 men for any war in which France should be engaged.

Master of France, Holland, Italy and Western Germany, with Spain a helpless ally, Austria humiliated and defeated, and Prussia reduced to abject and servile neutrality by her own greed, Napoleon now enjoyed such a position of supremacy in Europe as no sovereign in modern history had ever dreamed of; and though Britain, guarded by her inviolate seas, and Russia, protected by her vast spaces, were still unconquered, neither Power seemed able to do anything that would impair this tremendous domination. With a contemptuous gesture, Napoleon offered peace to Britain

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 11, 6th Edition Plate 69.

His inflexible foe, Pitt, had been killed by the magnitude of the disaster which had befallen his combinations ; and the dominating personality of the new ministry was Fox, who had always been an advocate of peace. Fox was willing to treat ; he was willing to make vast concessions, such as Pitt would have refused to consider. But even Fox could not stomach the high-handed and insincere methods of Napoleon, and the negotiations broke down. In truth, Napoleon had no desire for settled peace ; he wanted only an interval in which to digest his new conquests, a period of free access to the lands beyond the seas, towards which his ambitions still turned, and a chance of preparing a new and more effective blow against the baffling sea-power.

There was one instructive feature of these futile negotiations ; Napoleon expressed his readiness to return Hanover to George III., paying no regard to the fact that he had already ceded that province to Prussia. In truth he felt for that treacherous State nothing but the most unqualified contempt, and now that the danger was over he had no fear of anything that she could do. His behaviour to Prussia during 1806 was so contemptuous and so high-handed that at last, when it was too late, even the Prussian worm turned. In October Prussia declared war against France, and with a blind confidence in the unconquerable strength of the armies which Frederick the Great had moulded, did not even wait for the support which Russia was ready to afford.

But the army of Prussia had lost its efficiency during the long years of inglorious peace. And it now had to deal with a very different foe from any that had faced Frederick the Great. Since Austerlitz, the Grand Army had been cantoned in Germany, living on the plunder of the country. Its various corps were located with a view to the possibility of a Prussian war. Instantaneously, on the declaration of war, they closed in upon the doomed Prussians. A week's campaign was enough for a decision : and in the twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt (October 1806) the main Prussian armies were routed. Berlin was occupied ; and the King of Prussia, protected by very exiguous forces, was driven to fall back upon the protection of Russia.

Russia had taken no part in the actual fighting since Austerlitz. But she was still at war with France and had promised full support to Prussia. Russia, therefore, must be forced to withdraw from the war before Napoleon could feel free to complete his reorganisation of Central Europe.

With characteristic promptitude he threw his armies immediately against the Russian army, which had advanced into East Prussia. At the battle of Eylau, fought among the snows in February 1807, he received the first serious check in his victorious career; and his domination depended so much upon prestige that it seemed for a time likely to have serious effects. But in June 1807 this danger disappeared; for Napoleon won a decisive victory over the Russians at Friedland.

Disgusted by the failure of Britain and Austria to come to his aid, and anxious to devote his strength to the national object of overthrowing the Turks, the Tsar resolved to bring the war to an end, and to make friends with Napoleon, whose dazzling achievements had begun to fascinate him. At the end of June 1807 the two Emperors, who between them controlled almost the whole of Europe, met at Tilsit on a raft moored in the river Niemen, and discussed the fate of Europe for three hours, while the wretched King of Prussia waited in the rain on the river-bank, to learn his fate. His fate was to sign a treaty with France (July) whereby Prussia was at one stroke reduced to a negligible Power.¹ She was forced to cede all her lands west of the Elbe; they were added to Hesse to form a kingdom of Westphalia for Napoleon's youngest brother Jerome. She was forced to disgorge all the lands which she had torn from Poland in the second and third partitions; they were turned into a Grand Duchy of Warsaw under the protectorate of France. These cessions amounted to two-thirds of the area of Prussia as it was in 1806. But this was not all. Prussia was compelled to undertake to pay a heavy indemnity, and to maintain 100,000 French troops on her soil and at her expense. She was forbidden to maintain an army of more than 43,000 men, and thus reduced to military insignificance. And she was compelled to declare war upon Britain, and to accept an alliance with France. Prussia had become a helpless vassal.

The treaty with Russia was even more important. Alexander recognised all Napoleon's conquests; and, by a supplementary secret treaty of alliance, he undertook not only to make war against Britain, in common with Napoleon and all his vassals, but to join with him in forcing the few surviving independent States, Sweden, Denmark and Portugal, to declare war against Britain. There were plans also (though no formal agreement) for a joint

¹ See the maps, Atlas, 5th Edition Plates 11 and 24, 6th Edition Plates 67 and 69.

Franco-Russian advance through Central Asia against India.

Thus, at the end of two short years of incessant campaigning and hectoring diplomacy, Napoleon found himself undisputed master of the continent of Europe, wielding a plenitude of power such as no ruler in history had ever wielded. There was now no Power in the world capable of resisting him, save only the inflexible sea-power of Britain. Against her he could now turn all the force of Europe; every State, great or small, was either pledged to take part in the campaign, or threatened with extinction if it refused to do so. But even all Europe in combination could not cross that narrow ribbon of sea; and since Trafalgar, Britain's mastery of the sea was impregnable. Some new mode of attack was necessary. The plans were already shaped; they had begun to be put into execution; and they were to initiate a very distinctive and important stage in the great duel.

[For Chaps vii, viii, and x., Holland Rose, *Life of Napoleon and Revolutionary and Napoleonic Era*; Fortescue, *British Statesmen of the Great War and History of the British Army*, Mahan, *Influence of Sea-Power upon the French Revolution and Empire*; Laird Clowes, *History of the British Navy*, Morse Stephens, *Revolutionary Europe*, Fyffe, *History of Modern Europe*, Fournier, *Napoleon*; Martincau, *History of England, 1800-1815*. For this chapter only, Mahan, *Life of Nelson*; Corbett, *Campaign of Trafalgar*; Holland Rose, *William Pitt and the Great War*, Holland, *Memoirs of the Whig Party*; Hammond, *Charles Fox*, Browning, *England and Napoleon in 1803*.]

CHAPTER VIII

THE WAR OF COMMERCE : THE CONTINENTAL SYSTEM AND ITS RESULTS

(A.D. 1806-1815)

§ 1. *The New Phase of the Struggle between Napoleon and Britain.*

MASTER of Europe, but with a mastery that everywhere stopped at high-water mark, Napoleon was now free to turn the whole power of the Continent against Britain and her baffling dominion of the seas. All his ingenuity and all his vast resources were devoted to the task of crushing the last obstacle which still stood between him and a world-dominion such as neither Cæsar nor Charlemagne had ever known. He did not doubt of success ; and during the next half-dozen years the British Commonwealth was involved in perils of a new kind, and threatened by novel and dangerous attacks upon the very foundations of its power.

Throughout these anxious years the control of the destinies of the Commonwealth rested with a series of Tory ministries, which commanded overwhelming majorities in Parliament ; after the fall of the Grenville ministry in March 1807, the Whigs were no more than a weak and petulant opposition. It was a Tory oligarchy of landed gentry that carried Britain through the last and most intense phases of the war ; and, owing to the rapidity with which the economic transformation was proceeding, the Parliament through which this oligarchy worked was far less representative of the mind of the nation than it had ever been. Yet there was one important respect in which the ruling oligarchy truly expressed the mind of the nation. Its dogged, unbending, courageous resolve to resist the tyrant of Europe at all costs to the end was a genuine echo of national feeling. On the main issue of the war, the nation, much as it suffered, was united ; and even in Ireland there was no movement of a rebellious character.

There was during this period no single dominating personality like that of Pitt; and it is needless to discuss the differences between the ministries of Portland (1807), Perceval (1809) and Liverpool (1812). All were alike Tory ministries, filled mostly with second-rate men whose one claim to respect lies in the inflexible resolution with which they carried on the war. Yet these ministries unquestionably found means of countering Napoleon which were far more effective than Pitt ever discovered. Three men in the main deserve the credit for this success—George Canning, Lord Castlereagh, and the Marquis Wellesley. Canning and Castlereagh were both disciples of Pitt. Canning,¹ who was an orator and a wit, was incomparably the more brilliant of the pair, especially in Parliament; but Castlereagh,² though a miserable speaker, was probably a better administrator and a man of sounder judgment than his rival, and it was he, not Canning, who was to play the chief part in the overthrow of Napoleon. In the first years of the period (1807-9) Canning was Foreign Secretary, Castlereagh Secretary for War; and at this stage it was Canning who dominated the Cabinet and dictated its policy. The rivalry between the two men was, however, so keen that in 1809 they fought a duel, which broke up the Portland ministry, and for a time excluded both rivals from power (1809-12). During this interval the Marquis Wellesley, back from his triumphs in India, served as Foreign Secretary; and this was fortunate for his country, since Wellesley gave his whole-hearted support to the Peninsular War during the critical years when his brother Arthur was finding so much difficulty in holding his own that many men in England thought the struggle in Spain ought to be abandoned. In 1812 Castlereagh returned to power as Foreign Secretary in Lord Liverpool's ministry; and he controlled the foreign policy of Britain with marked success during the critical years 1812-15 and during the negotiation of the peace.

Such were the men who were called to pit their brains against the supreme genius of Napoleon, and to lead their country through one of the gravest crises in its history. Because they were identified with political reaction, their work has been undervalued. Mere justice demands that we should recognise the greatness of their achievement. It was this group of Tory gentlemen, limited and unimaginative, but obstinate, tenacious and unconquerable, who

¹ There is a short life of Canning by H. W. V. Temperley.

² There is a short life of Castlereagh by J. A. R. Marriott.

found the means of baffling all Napoleon's power, and of turning back against himself the weapons which he had designed for the ruin of the last bulwark of the world's freedom.

§ 2. *The Checkmating of Napoleon's Naval Plans.*

Two designs for the overthrow of British power concurrently occupied Napoleon's mind.

On the one hand, he still clung to the project of an invasion, which was not finally abandoned until 1809. On the other hand, he proposed to use his mastery of the Continent for the purpose of excluding all British goods from European markets. This seemed to be a very promising method of attack. For Britain had now ceased to be a self-supporting country; and in order to pay for the imported food which she needed and to find occupation for her great industrial population, it was indispensable that she should find markets for her manufactures and for the colonial produce which she controlled. Such a state of things had never existed before; and never before had any single Power been in a position to close simultaneously every market in Europe. Napoleon, with swift recognition of a new set of facts, proposed to make unflinching use of this situation.

The two parts of his great project—the naval attack and the commercial attack—were closely connected in his mind; and down to 1809 they were pursued concurrently. But it will be convenient to survey the naval conflict first, before analysing the new method of commercial war.

Trafalgar had not annihilated the French navy. The Brest fleet remained intact, and it was strengthened during the following years. But Napoleon hoped to combine with the French fleet in the centre two other naval wings, one in the north, the other in the south. The northern wing was to be provided by the Danish fleet, behind which would lie the Baltic fleet of Russia. It was for this among other reasons that the Emperor and the Tsar had agreed to force Denmark, hitherto neutral, to join the combination against Britain. But this plan was forestalled by the prompt and high-handed action of Canning. Having learnt from his secret service the purport of the secret Treaty of Tilsit (July 1807), Canning promptly (August) despatched to Denmark an ambassador, backed by a fleet and an army. Denmark was warned what was in store for her, offered a British alliance, and invited to deposit her navy in British harbours

until the end of the war. When Denmark refused to accept this sudden challenge, Copenhagen was bombarded, and the fleet was forced to surrender and carried off to Britain. This action, which seemed like mere piracy, outraged the public opinion of Europe, and was violently attacked by many in England; Canning's defence was that he had broken a weapon which Napoleon meant to use, before he could seize it.

The southern wing of the intended naval combination was to consist of the remnants of the Spanish fleet, together with the small navy of Portugal. In 1807, a peremptory demand was issued to Portugal, requiring her to join the anti-British coalition; and to enforce this order a French army under Junot was ordered to march without further delay upon Lisbon. Portugal at once yielded, since resistance seemed hopeless. Nevertheless Junot was ordered to advance by forced marches; and the reason of this haste was the necessity of capturing the Portuguese fleet. Meanwhile a Russian naval squadron, which had been in the Mediterranean at the time of the Treaty of Tilsit, was ordered to proceed to Lisbon: it could prevent the Portuguese fleet from escaping, and join forces with it after its surrender. But this pretty plan was spoilt by the promptitude of a British squadron under Sir Sidney Smith, which kept off the Russians, and escorted the Portuguese fleet to sea, carrying the Portuguese royal family to Brazil, there to maintain the standard of Portuguese independence. By the time Junot arrived, the birds had flown; and though the Russian fleet had got into the Tagus, it was safely blockaded there by Sidney Smith's squadron. Next year (1808), when a British force under Arthur Wellesley landed in Portugal and compelled Junot to surrender after the battle of Vimeiro, the most valuable result of the victory was that the Russian squadron was forced to surrender, and was removed to Britain.

Thus both wings of Napoleon's naval combination had been shattered before they could be brought into action. The ruin of his scheme was completed when in 1808 Spain broke into revolt against his usurpation, and the remnants of the Spanish navy were also enrolled on the British side. In 1809 the *coup de grâce* was administered to Napoleon's naval projects. The Brest fleet escaped from harbour; but it was penned into Aix roads, disorganised by an attack of fireships which drove several of its vessels ashore, and severely bombarded. The last possibility of any challenge

to British supremacy on the seas had been removed. Henceforward Napoleon must pin all his hopes upon his other weapon, the war of commerce ; and it is no mere coincidence that it was in 1809 and 1810 that the pressure of the continental system became most severe. Happily, by that time, Britain had organised her counter-measures ; and therefore, though hard-pressed, she was able to survive the terrible strain of these years.

§ 3. *The Continental System and the Orders in Council.*

The idea of attacking Britain by restricting the outlets for her trade was no invention of Napoleon's. The Directory had initiated this mode of attack by a decree of 1796 which ordained that any ship bringing British goods to a French port should be liable to confiscation. This was, of course, a flagrant disregard of neutral rights, and a repudiation of the principle that 'neutral ships make neutral goods,' which France had accepted in 1780. It led to bitter neutral complaints, and almost brought about open war between France and the United States, which severed diplomatic relations in 1798.¹ Britain had replied by prohibiting neutral trade between France and the French colonies, and by declaring a blockade of the coast from the Seine to the Elbe—a blockade too extensive to be made effective.

In 1801,² hoping to win the support of the Northern Powers and the United States, Napoleon had suddenly modified the French restrictions, and had declared his zealous adhesion to the 'sacred principles' of neutral freedom of trade. But Napoleon's devotion to these 'sacred principles' lasted only as long as they suited his convenience. He longed to wield freely the weapon of commercial war ; and when, in 1806, his dazzling victories had made him master of Europe, he used this weapon unflinchingly. Immediately after Jena, he launched from the Prussian capital (November 1806) the thunderbolt of the Berlin Decree. By this decree he declared the whole of the British Islands to be in a state of blockade—surely the most fictitious blockade ever ordered ! He prohibited all commerce with British ports, and ordained that all ships which entered any French or allied port with a cargo wholly or partly of British origin should be liable to seizure. This was the most outrageous violation of neutral rights which had ever been perpetrated. Its pretext was the British blockade of the

¹ See below, p. 267.

² See above, p. 184.

coast from the Seine to the Elbe ; but the British blockade could, in fact, be made to mean something, because ships attempting to break it could be stopped and brought before a prize court ; the Napoleonic blockade was no more than a pretext for the seizure of trading vessels entering French or allied harbours with British goods.

If the neutrals accepted this monstrous invasion of their rights (and, except in words, they showed little sign of any intention to resist it) they would be lending themselves to Napoleon's designs, and co-operating in the destruction of British trade. What reply was Britain to make ? Her most useful weapon lay in the fact that she could control the supply of two classes of goods, vitally important to Europe—the produce of the tropics, and the products of the new industry. She could damage Napoleon in the eyes of his subjects by making them realise that his commercial war was cutting them off from necessary supplies, and inflicting upon them grievous hardships. Was she to sacrifice this chance by allowing the neutrals, while they boycotted Britain at Napoleon's command, to import all the tropical produce which Europe needed ? Was she to permit the import of raw cotton into Europe, and thus encourage the fostering of industries that would compete with and ruin her own ? She must either do so, or run the risk of alienating the neutrals by imposing on them fresh restrictions, which, even if they were less severe than Napoleon's, would be more felt because they would be enforced by the pressure of sea-power.

At first she proceeded cautiously. An Order in Council issued in January 1807 pointed out that as Napoleon had prohibited all trade with Britain, it would be reasonable for Britain to prohibit all trade with France ; but she limited herself to forbidding trade between any two ports from which British ships were excluded. This left open to neutral ships the conduct of trade between Britain and the Continent, or between any other part of the world and any enemy port.

Before long the Treaty of Tilsit, followed by the breach with Denmark, brought Russia and Denmark into the ranks of Britain's enemies. To this stroke Britain replied by a new Order in Council (November 1807), whereby she declared a blockade of all ports from which British goods were excluded. This practically prohibited neutral trade with the Napoleonic Empire, except where a special license was given ; such licenses were freely given to merchants who were prepared to carry

British goods. The neutrals had in effect to choose between Napoleon's prohibition of trade with Britain, and Britain's prohibition of trade with Napoleon's subjects. They were between the devil and the deep sea. It became in fact impossible for them to be really neutral. The new Order also provided that neutral ships which were unaware of the Order would be warned, and required to proceed to British ports. At the same time, by a relaxation of the Navigation Acts, substantial concessions were made to all neutrals trading with British ports. The general purpose of these Orders was to encourage neutral trade with Britain, and give special encouragements to any neutrals who were willing to take the risk of disregarding Napoleon's arbitrary decrees.

The next move lay with Napoleon. In the Milan Decree of December 1807 he replied to the Order in Council of the previous month. Announcing, in defiance of the facts, that Britain had required every neutral vessel to call at a British port (this requirement only applied to vessels which were unaware of the November Order, and therefore affected only a few ships for a short time), he proclaimed that any neutral vessel calling at a British port was liable to seizure. The neutrals—a term which now covered practically only the United States of America—were thus reduced to a desperate situation. If their ships traded with any British ports they were liable to seizure by French privateers, or to subsequent confiscation if they entered a French or allied port. On the other hand, if they made for any French or allied port they were liable to the much more serious danger of seizure by the omnipresent British fleet, unless they had obtained a British license, which was readily granted to those who undertook to carry British goods.

In 1809 Britain modified her policy by limiting her blockade to the coasts of Holland, France and Italy, thus leaving open traffic with Spain and Portugal (now in revolt against Napoleon) and with Germany and the Baltic lands. Napoleon, on the other hand, stiffened his policy. He had found that, despite all his objurgations, his vassals were disregarding his edicts as much as they dared; and having now realised that his naval projects were utterly ruined, he resolved to drive home his commercial war with the utmost stringency. Both of the two great classes of commodities which Britain controlled—tropical produce and manufactured goods—were coming into Europe in large quantities, tropical produce often on the transparent pretext that it came from the Dutch or Spanish dominions, manufactured

goods by means of organised smuggling. In 1810 Napoleon struck at these two lines of trade. By the Trianon Tariff he imposed duties averaging 50 per cent. *ad valorem* on the principal colonial or tropical products, whencesoever derived. By the Decrees of Fontainebleau he ordained the seizure and destruction of British manufactured goods wherever found, and set up special tribunals to enforce this order. These monstrous enactments brought ruin and suffering wherever they were applied; and nothing did more to convince Napoleon's subjects that his rule was intolerable than the spectacle of the wanton destruction of great stores of desperately needed supplies.

Such were, in outline, the measures of attack and reprisal by means of which the fierce commercial war of these years was carried on. As the later sections of this chapter will show, Napoleon's Continental System inflicted terrible distress upon Britain; but it failed of its purpose, and in the end played a very great part in arousing that revolt of the nations of Europe which brought down the proud fabric of the Napoleonic Empire in ruins. It was a ruinously false policy, just because it was fundamentally unjust.

Is the policy of the British Orders in Council open to the same condemnation? That is a much more difficult question to answer. The Orders in Council were strongly condemned at the time, not only by the neutrals, but by important bodies of opinion in Britain. The main ground of attack, both at the time and since, was that the Orders in Council constituted an intolerable invasion of neutral freedom of trade, which could not be justified even by the fact that they were an answer to the still more outrageous invasions of neutral rights perpetrated by Napoleon. To this contention there is only one tenable answer. If neutral traders had been allowed, without restraint, to accept the conditions laid down by Napoleon, and to make great profits by co-operating with him (as in effect they would have done) in the ruin of Britain, they would in reality have ceased to be neutrals. And if, by so acting, they had ensured the success of Napoleon's great design, they would have directly helped to bring about the destruction of the last effective bulwark against the establishment of a universal military despotism. Whether this result would or would not have followed if Britain had abstained from making any direct reply to Napoleon's challenge, is a difficult question to which no one can give a dogmatic answer. But, at the least, the answer is sufficiently doubtful

to make a just man hesitate before condemning outright the policy pursued by men who knew that they were defending not only the freedom of their country, but the freedom of the world.

§ 4. *British Counter-Strikes against the Continental System.*

It was not only by Orders in Council, and by forbidding neutrals to become Napoleon's tools, that Britain fought against the Continental System. She used also more direct methods of attack, all of which were effective, and some of which had lasting results.

In the first place, she did all that was possible to facilitate the ingress of British goods into Europe. She encouraged direct trade with those among Napoleon's vassals who, like the Dutch and the Danes, rendered only a perfunctory and unwilling obedience to his decrees. She also organised a highly efficient system of smuggling on a colossal scale; and, though the remarkable success of this system was due mainly to the ingenuity and energy of individual merchants and sailors, it received all the support that Government could give it. In Northern Europe an excellent base for all this traffic was provided by the annexation of Heligoland in 1807, whence both the German and the Danish coasts could be quickly reached. By this route an immense stream of British manufactures and colonial produce passed into Western Germany, and was disseminated thence over Central Europe and even into France itself. Between 1806 and 1810 this was perhaps the most serious puncture in the Continental System. The necessity of stopping it drove Napoleon in 1810 to some of his most high-handed annexations.

In the Mediterranean the 'punctures' in the Continental System, and the bases for contraband trade, were more numerous. Gibraltar formed an excellent base for traffic with Spain; but as soon as the Spanish revolt began, in 1808, the whole of Spain became one huge puncture in the system. Malta provided a similar base for trade with Italy, and the island of Sicily (which was protected by a British fleet and army throughout the period) was even more valuable. In 1809 Britain occupied the Ionian Islands; they had been taken by Russia in 1799, and transferred to France by the Treaty of Tilsit. From the Ionian Islands a smuggling trade could be carried on with the Dalmatian coast and the Austrian Empire. Through Turkey and up the Danube,

also, a stream of British imports passed into Central Europe. On all hands Napoleon found that, though he could hamper and restrict the ingress of British trade, it was impossible to seal hermetically a whole continent with a coastline so indented as that of Europe, against a people of fertile ingenuity and irrepressible energy.

The second form which was assumed by British action against the Continental System was the conquest of the oversea possessions of France and her allies, or the opening of new markets in those which were not conquered. By this means a double purpose was served: Britain's control over the sources of supply of colonial produce was confirmed, so that Europe either had to draw these goods from British sources or do without them; and at the same time new markets were found for the cotton goods of Lancashire and the other products of British industry. In this way an expansion of the territory of the British Empire was brought about which would probably never have taken place but for the pressure of the Continental System.

A brief catalogue must suffice for these acquisitions. In 1806 Cape Colony, which had been restored to Holland by the Peace of Amiens, was reoccupied; and this time the occupation was to be permanent. In the Indian Ocean the French islands of Bourbon, Mauritius, Rodriguez and the Seychelles were taken in 1810; with the exception of Bourbon, these were to be permanent additions to the British Empire. In 1811 an expedition was despatched from India to occupy Java, the richest part of the Dutch Empire. The British occupation of Java was only to last for five years; but it was distinguished by the reforming administration of Sir Stamford Raffles, who did much to remedy the grievances from which the native population had suffered under Dutch rule. In the West Indies every flag save the British and the Spanish disappeared during these years; not only Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, Tobago and Dutch Guiana, which had been handed back at the Peace of Amiens, but the Dutch island of Curaçoa and the Danish islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix were taken. Most of these conquests were restored at the end of the war; but in the meanwhile all their trade fell into British hands, and helped to save Britain from the destruction which Napoleon had planned for her.

Yet more important than these acquisitions was the admission of British trade to the markets of South America, which had been rigidly closed ever since the foundation of

the Spanish Empire. There were already signs in the Spanish colonies of a readiness to revolt against the deadening control of the home Government; and so long as Spain remained a dependent ally of Napoleon, it seemed to be in the interests of Britain to stimulate this movement of revolt. In 1806, misled by exaggerated accounts of unrest in the Argentine, Sir Home Popham, without orders from home, set out from Cape Colony with a small force, and made an ill-managed attack on Buenos Ayres. Meanwhile the home Government had decided to attempt the reduction of Chile. The force destined for this purpose had to be diverted to Buenos Ayres, where Popham had got himself into difficulties. But it achieved no success, and was withdrawn; the ill-devised attempt to conquer Spanish South America thus ended in failure.

But this result was almost immediately redressed by the consequences of the Peninsular War in Europe. Both Brazil and the Spanish lands threw open their ports to the ships of Britain, the Power that was supporting the patriotic cause at home. This great opportunity for British trade came at a moment when the pressure of the Continental System was being very severely felt in Britain, and the result was that huge accumulations of goods were poured into South America, which bought them eagerly, having been almost shut off from European trade during the years of the war. In spite of the distress caused by the over-trading of the first years, it is not impossible that the opening of the South American market saved the situation, coming as it did at a moment when the United States had closed their ports to British ships.¹

At the end of the period yet another vast market was thrown open to the enterprise of private traders. All European competition had now come to an end in India, thanks to Napoleon; but the trading monopoly of the East India Company still survived. In 1813 the charter of the Company fell to be renewed, and the occasion was seized to give free access to the trade of India to all British merchants. One very important result of this change was that British manufactures began to pour into India on a vastly increased scale; and the Indian hand-loom weaver of cotton goods, whose products had long commanded the markets of the world, found himself beaten in his own bazaars by the products of the Lancashire factories.

It remains to consider the third group of measures

¹ See below, Chap. ix. p. 269.

adopted by Britain in the struggle against Napoleon : the affording of encouragement and help to every movement of resistance offered by any of the peoples of Europe. In pursuing this policy Britain at last discovered the true mode of using her national strength. With an omnipotent navy, which made it possible for her to deliver sudden and unexpected blows against any point in the long European coastline, and with a small but mobile army, unable by itself to withstand the Napoleonic legions, but possessing, thanks to the navy, a freedom of movement which these could never rival, she could afford a backbone to resistance whenever it might arise, provided that it was in a region accessible from the sea, or she could make unexpected descents which would divert the forces of the master of Europe, and so give help even to those whom she could not directly aid.

As early as 1806 there had been a brilliant little illustration of what could be done in this way. While Napoleon was engaged in the Austerlitz campaign, the peasants of Calabria rose in revolt against the French forces which were over-running Southern Italy. A British force of 5000 men under Sir John Stuart was promptly thrown into Calabria from Sicily ; and at the battle of Maida it inflicted a sharp defeat upon an equal number of French troops—the first occasion on which the unconquerable French had been beaten on anything like equal terms. Nothing came of this victory, because the thunderbolt of Austerlitz made further resistance futile. The British force evaded pursuit by retreating across the sea, where it could not be touched. But in Sicily, because it was an island, Britain was able through all these years to maintain a European State independent of Napoleon. A naval squadron, an army of 10,000 men, and a regular subsidy protected Sicily and made it a source of perpetual unrest in Southern Italy.

In the North, the Danish expedition of 1807, though its aims were primarily naval, provided an object lesson in the use of a sea-borne army. The army was landed, did its work, and was withdrawn, before Napoleon could do anything to interfere. In 1808 an army of 10,000 men under Sir John Moore was sent to Sweden to aid its resistance against France and Russia. The erratic behaviour of the King of Sweden made it necessary to withdraw this force ; but the ease with which it was landed and withdrawn was instructive.

The greatest, and also the most unfortunate, of these

oversea expeditions was designed for the year 1809. In the spring of that year Austria, encouraged by the success of the Spanish revolt, in 1808,¹ had taken up arms, singlehanded, against the ever-encroaching tyranny of Napoleon. It was impossible for Britain to give her direct aid, otherwise than by the grant of subsidies; but a great expedition was planned to distract the attention of the enemy and to divide his forces. It was resolved to attack the coast of the Netherlands, and if possible to occupy Antwerp, where Napoleon was building great dockyards. An army of 40,000, the largest hitherto sent abroad by Britain, was landed on the island of Walcheren. Badly led by the incompetent Lord Chatham, it achieved nothing; and for a time this failure discouraged continental adventures. Yet the ease with which it was landed, and the security with which it was withdrawn, showed how dangerous the command of the sea could be to a land-power.

And meanwhile an ideal opportunity had been opened for the use of a sea-borne army when, in 1808, the Spanish people rose in revolt against Napoleon. We shall deal with this more fully in a later chapter, because it was to be the turning-point of the long conflict, and the beginning of the conqueror's downfall. It opened to Britain the true mode of employing her resources, and of draining away the strength of her formidable enemy; and it gave to her soldiers, who had hitherto achieved nothing of great importance in the long wars, the means of proving their fighting quality, and of winning for their country a military prestige only less than the splendour of her naval fame. It is significant that the British army did not begin to play an important part in the great conflict until the navy had finally achieved its supremacy; and it was the navy's secure control of the seas which, by making communications and supplies absolutely safe, made the triumph of the army possible.

The counter-strokes of Britain against the Continental System—her organised system of contraband, her conquest of oversea markets, and her stimulation of resistance in Europe—were thus, on the whole, well-designed and successful. They enabled her to stand the terrible strain which the Continental System inflicted upon her. They prepared the way for the great events which were to ruin the imposing fabric of Napoleon's power. And, in particular, they forced upon Napoleon, in his desperate endeavour

¹ See below, Chap. x. p 278.

to make his system water-tight, a series of aggressions and annexations which aroused against him the burning resentment of half of Europe

§ 5 *Effects of the Continental System upon Napoleon's Policy*

During the first three years of his commercial struggle with Britain, Napoleon seems to have imagined that it would be enough to issue his edicts to his submissive vassals. But he soon found that it was one thing to issue edicts, and quite another to ensure that they were effectively enforced. The exclusion of colonial produce and of manufactured goods was against the interests of merchants and consumers everywhere, and no Government could enforce it without endangering its authority over its subjects. The vassal States therefore disregarded Napoleon's edicts as much as they dared. He could not be sure of obedience except in the lands directly under his own control, and he was gradually forced into a series of high-handed annexations of sea-board territories.

Even during the first three years this inevitable consequence of his policy was becoming apparent. The Pope had courageously refused in 1806 to close the ports of the Papal States against British shipping, on the ground that he was not at war with Britain: so dangerous a puncture could not be tolerated, and Napoleon forcibly occupied the Papal ports (1808), while an army of occupation practically reduced the Pope's power in his own dominions to a nullity. This was the beginning of an alienation from the head of the Catholic Church which largely undid the work achieved by the Concordat of 1801. Again, it was largely the necessity of getting effective control over the Spanish ports which led Napoleon in 1808 to depose the Spanish king and his son: and this not only led to the ruinous Spanish war, but the cynical treachery with which the change was effected alarmed every ruling prince in Europe.

In 1809, however, Napoleon was driven to adopt a more drastic policy; and he entered upon that career of reckless and high-handed violence which frightened the shrewdest of his advisers, such as Talleyrand and Fouché, and convinced them that sooner or later a crash must come. Indeed, the situation in 1809 was such as to demand vigorous action if the Continental System was not to break down. The neutrals, on whom Napoleon had counted, had either been driven from the seas, or were trading under British

licenses. British goods were pouring into Europe through Holland and Germany, through Italy and Turkey. At all costs, and whatever opposition might have to be faced, the trade restrictions must be enforced ; for there was now no other hope of reducing the resistance of Britain.

In 1809 the breach with the Papacy was made final and irreparable. An insolent decree revoked ' the donation of Charlemagne, our august predecessor,' and annexed the Papal States to France ; while the brave old Pope was sent into captivity at Avignon. In the same year, after the defeat of Austria, the Dalmatian coast, and the lands behind it, were annexed to France under the name of the ' Illyrian Province,' as the only means of stopping the ingress of British goods.

But the annexations of 1810 were yet more striking and high-handed. Holland had been turned into a dependent kingdom, with Napoleon's own brother Louis as king. But Louis knew that the enforcement of the exclusion of British trade would mean ruin to a trading nation such as the Dutch, and he had allowed an almost open trade to be carried on. From 1806 to 1810 he received a long series of rebukes and protests, of increasing asperity, from his autocratic brother : finally, in 1810, he was swept from his throne, and Holland was directly annexed to France. Beyond Holland lay the German coastline, where the smuggling trade, based on Heligoland, was carried on upon a colossal scale. Without regard to the rights of the existing rulers (one of whom, the Duke of Oldenburg, was a cousin of the Tsar), all this coast-land, together with a belt of territory extending across the base of the Danish peninsula, was directly annexed to France.

It was in 1810 that the pressure of the Continental System was most severe, and that its effects were most cruelly felt in Britain. But it was also in 1810 that the breakdown of the system began to be visible, and that the danger which it threatened to Napoleon's power began to be displayed. This was especially demonstrated by the attitude of Sweden and Russia. Sweden had accepted the Continental System in 1809 ; and, as if to complete the triumph of Napoleon, one of his marshals, Bernadotte, was invited to become Crown Prince of Sweden, the King having no heir. But Bernadotte, who had no love for Napoleon, did not wish to alienate his future subjects ; he made no serious attempt to enforce the edicts, and Sweden's co-operation in the system was from the first merely nominal. Bernadotte

would scarcely have ventured to follow so independent a line if he had not known that his great neighbour, Russia, whose adhesion to the Continental System had formed one of its chief supports, was already growing tired of it. The Tsar had realised that the exclusion of colonial produce and British manufactures was seriously impairing the prosperity of his subjects. In 1810 he issued an ukase which practically brought to an end the exclusion of colonial produce, during 1811 he gradually relaxed the restrictions on British imports, and in 1812 the trade between Russia and Britain almost returned to normal conditions. This was the death-blow of the Continental System. It was in 1812 that Britain found it possible to withdraw her Orders in Council, just too late to prevent the outbreak of war with the United States, and during 1813 the course of international trade had begun to return to normal conditions. The Tsar's practical withdrawal from the Continental System brought about a definite breach between the two great Empires which had dominated Europe in 1807, and with that breach the final act in the Napoleonic drama began.¹

Two broad causes combined to bring about the rapid collapse of Napoleon's gigantic power in the years 1812-1814. One of these was the rising tide of national sentiment in most of the countries of Europe which will be discussed in the next chapter. The other was the resentment and the suffering caused by the Continental System. But the national spirit would scarcely have been goaded to the point of effective resistance but for the anger aroused by the restraint of trade. If the neutrals had been permitted to co-operate with Napoleon by supplying Europe with the goods she needed and by destroying the trade-ascendancy of Britain, this discontent might never have been brought to the sticking-point. If, by these means, Britain had been defeated in 1807 or 1808, as Napoleon confidently expected, the national risings when they came, would have lacked the support which they received in money and men and ships from the unrelenting Power that ruled the seas. And without that help their success might have been long delayed.

§ 6 *The Effect of the Continental System in Britain.*

Although Britain held out against the pressure of Napoleon's blockade, it was only at the cost of great suffering

¹ See below, p. 285.

The years 1806-1815 were for the mass of the British people a period not only of misery but of degradation ; and the circumstances were such as to render effective remedial measures very difficult, even if the fear of revolution had not caused the governing class to be dominated by a blind and dogged resolve to resist all change.

The first cause of the sufferings of these years was a shortage of food supplies. The population was increasing more rapidly than ever ; it rose by a million and a quarter in England and Wales alone between 1801 and 1811 ; and it was not possible for the production of food to keep pace with the growth of the population. In normal years about one-fifth of the corn supply had to be imported, and there were several bad harvests when the supply fell so far short as almost to lead to famine. The New World had not yet begun to send food-stuffs to Britain on any large scale ; she was dependent in the main upon imports from Europe, and especially from Poland. If Napoleon had chosen to forbid the export of corn, he might perhaps have brought Britain to her knees. Fortunately he had persuaded himself that the best way to ruin her was to encourage her to buy while preventing her from selling ; and he therefore freely issued licenses for the export of corn. Nevertheless, the Continental System, by placing obstacles in the way of interchange, added greatly to the difficulty of obtaining sufficient imports, and was therefore largely responsible for the food-shortage which marked these years.

Even when the food supply was adequate in amount, prices were terribly high. But wages did not rise in proportion to the increase in the cost of living ; in some trades they actually declined. The result was that a rapidly increasing proportion of the working classes had to accept supplementary grants from the Poor Law authorities in order to keep themselves alive. The system of making such supplementary grants to families in full work—the 'Speenhamland' system¹—was consequently rapidly extended during these years over the greater part of the country. Mischievous as were the results which flowed from this system, it is probably true that, in the unnatural conditions into which the country had been forced by the commercial war, this system alone saved large masses of the British people from utter ruin and starvation.

The second main cause of the suffering of these years was the restriction of exports, and therefore of output, which

¹ See above, p. 216.

necessarily resulted from the Continental System. Thanks to the ingenuity and enterprise displayed in discovering methods of circumventing Napoleon's prohibitions, the average quantity of British goods exported seems to have been fairly steady. But it was not enough that the volume of exports should be maintained. If employment was to be found for the growing industrial population of Britain, there had to be a rapid expansion. For the commercial war coincided with the second stage of the industrial revolution in the textile trades: the power-loom (invented as long before as 1790) only began to come into use after 1801, and it was not employed on a large scale until the years of the Continental Blockade. The introduction of the power-loom made it possible for the British trader to face the cost and risk of smuggling his goods into Europe, and still to sell them at a price which beat foreign competitors. But it brought disaster to the weavers. It displaced a large amount of labour; and as the Continental System prevented the increase of sales which would normally have resulted from increased cheapness, there was a large surplus of labour competing for the available employment. In these conditions the workers were at the mercy of their employers, and wages fell. It was only gradually that the power-loom captured the whole of the weaving industry; down to almost the middle of the nineteenth century a very large proportion of the work—especially the more complicated work—was still done on hand-loom in the workers' own cottages. But the weavers were paid, as they always had been paid, by the piece, and the amount paid for the weaving of a piece of cloth was now fixed by the cost of weaving it on a power-loom. In 1795 the amount paid for a 'piece' of cotton cloth was just under 40s.; in 1810 it had fallen to 15s.; and, as the restriction on exports made employment irregular, very large numbers of weavers could earn no more than about 6s. per week—and this at a time when the cost of living was soaring.

It was in the weaving of cotton and woollens that the distress was most felt. The metal industries found some compensation for restriction of export in the demands of the army and navy. In 1810 and the following years there was also much distress among the framework hosiery knitters of Leicester and Nottingham. The employers were striving to cheapen production by making stuff on wide frames and cutting it up into hose, instead of weaving the hose as a whole; and this meant a reduction of labour. Costs had

to be cut down if the risk and expense of export in the face of the Continental System were to be met.

In the hope of finding a remedy for their sufferings the operatives (especially the weavers) made repeated application to Parliament, asking it to fix regular rates of wages, or to find some other mode of redress. But Parliament was helpless. The problem was unexampled, not only in British history, but in the history of the world. The accepted economic theories of the time condemned State intervention in industrial questions. But the negative attitude of Parliament quite naturally tended to undermine the loyalty of the suffering classes to the institutions of their country. They had begun to look to great political changes as the necessary preliminary to any improvement in their lot; and the growth of this feeling is one of the most significant features of the period.

Since Parliament would not or could not help them, the operatives tried to combine for self-defence. But Pitt's Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 stood in the way. These Acts threatened those who combined to force up wages with crushing penalties for conspiracy; and this provided another ground for complaint against the existing political order. In spite of the Combination Acts, however, Trade Unions were becoming active. The first systematic attempts at industrial strikes on a large scale belong to these years. There were extensive strikes among the Lancashire weavers in 1808, among the Durham miners and the Lancashire spinners in 1810, among the Scottish weavers in 1811. But none of these led to any useful result; the economic situation was too unfavourable. Finally, in 1811 and 1812, some of the operatives began to resort to blind violence. In Nottingham bands of men, known as Luddites, took to destroying the broad frames on which 'cut-up' hosiery was made. Many hundreds of frames were destroyed, and troops had to be brought in to restore order. In 1812 the 'Luddite Riots' extended to Lancashire and Yorkshire, where they assumed a more dangerous form. Machinery was destroyed; some murders were committed.

In the last years of the war these troubles died down. They died down because the Continental System had failed, and foreign trade was beginning to resume its normal course. But the evil consequences of the Continental System did not end with its breakdown. It had complicated the already difficult problems of the industrial transformation; it had, at a very critical stage in this

transformation, forced down wages to an unnaturally low level; and a generation of anxiety and trouble was to pass before these evil consequences of the system could be nullified.

One of the most significant features of this period of the war was a revival of the demand for political reconstruction which had been crushed out by Pitt's repressive policy in the years following 1794.¹ The earlier reform movement had never obtained any secure hold over the masses of the people. The new movement drew most of its strength from them, just because political change had come to seem a necessary step towards social amelioration. The main schools of thought which were to play a part in the long political discussion of the next generation were emerging during these years. A group of intellectual Whigs had, by the foundation of the *Edinburgh Review* (1802), given a public organ to their party; and though the Whigs were by no means hearty advocates of large political changes, they were at least critics of Toryism and of the negation of all change. The radical philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, had gathered round him that remarkable group of disciples and interpreters who were, in the next period, to exercise an influence over the process of reconstruction out of all proportion to their numbers. Major Cartwright had revived the radicalism of the old pre-revolutionary school, and had founded in 1812 the first of his Hampden Clubs to advocate manhood suffrage and shorter Parliaments. In 1807 Westminster, one of the few democratic constituencies in England, elected Sir Francis Burdett to the House of Commons as a Radical Reformer; and from that date there were always one or two Radical members in Parliament. The Westminster election of 1807 was one of the first in which modern electioneering methods were pursued. And the organiser of victory was no less a person than Francis Place, the Charing Cross tailor, who was to play a vastly important part in the agitations of the next thirty years.

But perhaps the most doughty champion of political reform enlisted during these years was William Cobbett, one of the most effective sledge-hammer journalists who have ever wielded a pen. We shall have to estimate his work and influence in a later chapter.² Here it is enough to note the significant development of his opinions, which reflects the change which was going on in the country. In 1802 Cobbett had started his weekly *Political Register* to support

¹ Above, Chap. ii. pp. 108-181.

² See below, Bk. ix. chap. ii. p. 319.

Pitt and denounce Napoleon. In 1806, without abandoning his hatred of 'the Corsican ogre,' he had suddenly swung round and begun to advocate radical reform. His trenchant, lucid and picturesque denunciations of the borough-mongers and place-hunters whom he described as sucking the nation's blood, his lurid if often wrong-headed descriptions of the evils from which the body politic was suffering, found readers everywhere. The stagnation of political life which had resulted from the French Revolution in the greater part of the nation had come to an end.

[See list at end of chap. vii.; also Temperley, *Life of Canning*; Marriott, *Castlereagh*; Porter, *Progress of the Nation*; Holland Rose, *Napoleonic Studies*; Hammond, *Village Labourer, Town Labourer, Skilled Labourer*; Brougham, *Life and Times*; *The Creevey Papers*; *The Croker Papers*; Wallas, *Life of Place*; Cornwall Lewis, *Administrations of Great Britain*; Traill, *Social England*; Carlyle, *Cobbett*.]

CHAPTER IX

THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AND THE UNITED STATES: THE WAR OF 1812

§ 1. *The Attitude of America towards the War.*

NEXT to the miseries which Napoleon's Continental System inflicted upon the working people of Britain, its most important result, for the British Commonwealth, was that it prevented the healing over of friction with the United States, and led to a miserable war, which left behind it a heritage of ill-feeling between the two great divisions of the English-speaking world.

The Treaty of 1783 had not solved all difficulties between Britain and the United States. The States had refused to carry out the terms of the treaty in regard to the compensation to be paid to Loyalists; and until these terms were fulfilled Britain had refused to hand over eight fortified posts which she held on the American side of the Great Lakes. These causes of friction were not removed until 1796; and, indeed, the individual States never consented to compensate the Loyalists. Thus bad feeling already existed, when the French Revolution came to exacerbate it.

Yet, apart from the French Revolution, these difficulties would have been removed without much difficulty. The natural affinities between two peoples who shared the same laws, the same language, and the same traditions were too deep to be permanently severed even by the shock of war. And the course of events was making them more and more necessary to one another. The growing population of the States, which rose from 4,000,000 in 1783 to over 7,000,000 in 1810, was now beginning to people the central plain, where the new States of Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio were organised during this period; and this population, mainly engaged in agriculture, afforded a magnificent opening for British trade. Meanwhile, the Southern States were becoming the main source of supply for the raw material of the greatest of the new British industries, cotton. The

British supply of raw cotton had hitherto come mainly from the West Indies and from India, but these sources of supply were beginning to be exhausted. In 1793 the invention of a gin for extracting seeds from the short-stapled cotton which could be grown on the American mainland transformed the situation. As late as 1790 practically no American cotton came to England. By 1810 America had already become the chief source of supply. And the influence of this mutually advantageous traffic, had peace and a return of good-will made it possible, must have brought about friendly co-operation and mutual understanding in other spheres besides that of commerce. In this as in other respects the violent upheaval of the French Revolution brought nothing but ill to the British Commonwealth. It postponed for more than a generation the restoration of friendly relations, and led to events which have in some degree poisoned these relations ever since.

The States-General met in Paris only two months after Washington assumed the chair as first President of the United States. It was natural that the Revolution in France should be hailed with enthusiasm in America. Across three thousand miles of ocean the discords and the horrors that soon began to defile the movement in France made little impression, though they alarmed some of the wiser and more moderate men. When the war began in 1792 sympathy was all but unanimous on the side of France ; when Britain was drawn in, in 1793, this sympathy was, in many quarters, even intensified : the republic of France seemed to be fighting for her existence against the same foe from whom France had helped the American republic to win its freedom. No American could forget that France had been his ally. Indeed, it became a question whether the States were not bound (as French envoys strongly urged) to make common cause with France under the Treaty of 1778, by which the United States had guaranteed the security of the French possessions in America ; and Britain expected and feared that this course would be taken. Washington, however, made haste to issue a declaration of neutrality, and thus proclaimed what was to become the traditional American policy of non-intervention in European affairs. But the general sentiment was on the side of France ; and this sentiment was strengthened when the British navy began to interfere with American foreign trade, stopping the carriage of goods in American ships from the French colonies to France. Another factor also contributed to intensify

anti-British feeling. Deserters from the British navy, or mercantile sailors afraid of impressment, could readily take refuge in American ships. But when naval vessels began to stop American ships and forcibly remove British sailors, or men claimed to be British sailors, American opinion took fire. From the beginning to the end of the war this was the most acute cause of friction.

Two political parties had already appeared in America, and their differences led them to take different attitudes on the European war. The Federalist party, which included some of the wisest statesmen of the Revolution, notably Washington and Alexander Hamilton, were anxious to strengthen the central Government as against the individual States; they were also distrustful of the more extreme forms of democracy; and this distrust made them view with distaste the extravagances of the French Revolution, and inclined them to friendship with Britain. The Republican party, whose inspirer was Thomas Jefferson, were distrustful of the central government, and were doctrinaire democrats. Their sympathies were passionately with France and strongly anti-British. Fortunately for Britain, Washington and the Federalists were in power when the war began, and held office until 1801.

In the hope of getting rid of the friction with Britain, Washington sent John Jay to London to negotiate a treaty (1794). But the Jay Treaty, though it greatly eased the situation for American traders, was badly received, mainly because Britain had refused to abandon her practice of seizing British seamen on American ships. It is significant that this treaty contained a clause providing that the dispute about the boundary between Canada and the States should be settled by a joint commission; this was the beginning of the modern arbitration movement.

Meanwhile France had, as we have seen,¹ taken up an attitude towards neutral trade far more oppressive than that of Britain: she had not only threatened (1796) the seizure of all neutral vessels carrying British goods into French harbours, but had actually seized and confiscated a number of American ships. When an American envoy was sent to protest, he was ignominiously dismissed, and the Directory later had the insolence to propose that the States should pay a sort of tribute for the right of carrying on their trade. This aroused indignation in America: the States began to arm, and during the three years 1798-1801 there

¹ Above, p. 248.

was 'a sort of war' between them and France. It was only brought to an end when, in 1801, Napoleon was trying to ingratiate himself with the neutrals.¹ If a settlement with France had not then been made, America might have found herself exposed to the full power of Napoleon, without the protection which the British fleet had hitherto afforded her; for the Peace of Amiens soon followed. That this was not a wholly illusory fear was shown by Napoleon's busy projects during the interval of peace. He was taking up again the dream of a colonial empire. He was reconquering San Domingo. He had compelled Spain to transfer to him the vast province of Louisiana, and was preparing an army to despatch to this province. Had the Peace of Amiens been prolonged for a year, or had Britain been defeated, the States might have found themselves faced by a militant French power on the lower Mississippi.

Meanwhile the Federalists had fallen from power in America, and the Republican Jefferson had become President (1801). Even Jefferson, despite his French sympathies, had no liking for the prospect of a revived French Empire beyond the Mississippi. But a way out of the difficulty soon presented itself. Napoleon recognised that while the war with Britain lasted, he could do nothing in Louisiana; and he therefore agreed to sell this vast tract and all its inhabitants to the States, hoping thus to prevent co-operation between them and Britain. Jefferson eagerly closed the bargain, though it was a flagrant departure from his democratic doctrine that peoples have a right to choose their own rulers. Not even the 60,000 French and Spanish inhabitants, still less the Indians, were consulted.

During the first three years of the renewed war American trade increased by leaps and bounds. But in 1806, as we have seen,² the situation changed: the British blockade of the coast from the Seine to the Elbe, the Berlin Decree, the Orders in Council, the Milan Decree came in turn; and the American sailor found himself exposed to tremendous risks in carrying on the traffic he had found so lucrative. He cursed both sides alike. But he was inclined to lay the heaviest weight of blame upon Britain, because, although the restrictions imposed by Britain were less severe than those imposed by Napoleon, it was with British ships that he most often came in conflict. The coast of America was practically blockaded during these years, and some of the actions of the blockading vessels, notably the attack on the

¹ Above, p. 251.

² *Ibid.*

American ship *Chesapeake* in 1807, were intolerably high-handed. The intense resentment aroused by these proceedings blinded most Americans to the magnitude of the issues about which the world-conflict was being fought. They were concerned to defend their own rights and the freedom of the seas. They did not concern themselves with the questions whether Napoleon's power was a menace to the freedom of the world and in the long run to their own, whether this menace could be resisted by any other means than the pressure of sea-power, or whether the effective exercise of this pressure was compatible with the maintenance of complete freedom for neutral trade.

Negotiations went on unceasingly, but they were in vain. For Britain would not assent to the two fundamental points on which the States insisted: she would not consent to raise the blockade of Napoleon's ports; she would not abandon her claim to search for British deserters in American ships. Jefferson tried to bring the combatants to reason by laying an embargo on all American exports (1807). This blow, though nominally aimed at both belligerents, was felt only by Britain, but it did not make her yield. If it had been effectual, it would have involved the total ruin of American trade, which was only saved by the wholesale evasion of the Act, and by the ingenuity with which smuggling was carried on through Canada, the Bermudas, and the islands on the coast of Florida. In 1809 the embargo was withdrawn, having totally failed of its purpose. In its place a Non-intercourse Act was adopted, which prohibited all direct intercourse with Britain or France or their immediate dependencies. But this also failed of its purpose. Britain did not withdraw her Orders in Council. Napoleon, on his side, ordered the seizure and sale of every American ship and cargo in every port under French control. And America, in despair, changed her tactics and threw open her trade to all the world (1810), with a proviso that if one of the belligerents should withdraw its restrictions and the other remain obdurate, the President should be empowered to reimpose non-intercourse against the latter.

Napoleon saw in this situation a chance of enlisting the United States on his side. So he announced that his Decrees would be withdrawn on November 1, 1810, provided that, before that date, the British Orders in Council had been cancelled, or America had forced Britain to 'respect her rights.' His Decrees were only to be withdrawn so far as concerned America; the exclusion of British goods from

the Continent was still to continue. But the cancellation of the Orders in Council, on which his concession was conditional, was to be complete. President Madison (who had succeeded Jefferson in 1809) fell into the trap. He accepted Napoleon's withdrawal as definite. He gave Britain three months' notice, and when she had failed to cancel her Orders by the appointed date, he prohibited all intercourse with her. Finally, on June 18, 1812, with the approval of Congress, he declared war against Britain.

In the same month Napoleon's fateful march on Moscow began. This meant the downfall of the Continental System, and before the end of the month the British Orders in Council were suspended. Thus, within five days of the opening of war, the primary cause of the war had disappeared. Yet the war itself continued, for two main reasons. The first was that Britain still refused to abandon her claim to seize British deserters on American ships. The second was that America had been fired by the ambition of conquering Canada, at a time when the main British forces were necessarily engaged elsewhere in the final death-grapple for the freedom of the world.

§ 2. *The War of 1812-1815.*

The war thus miserably begun lasted for three years, and had no result save the alienation of the two peoples whom it embroiled, and the awakening in Canada of a proud national sentiment, born of successful resistance to invasion. We may therefore content ourselves with the broadest survey of the main features of the fighting on sea and on land.

The American navy was too weak to be able to fight any fleet actions with the British. It could not prevent a blockade of the coast, which became more severe as the war proceeded, and almost put an end to American trade. But individual ships fought many single-ship actions with the utmost skill and gallantry. In the first year of the war, indeed, their successes in such actions were so striking as to cause grave perturbation in Britain. In 1813 the Admiralty had to forbid British ships to engage American ships of superior size. Thenceforward the results of these contests were more even; the most famous of these sea-duels, fought between the *Chesapeake* and the *Shannon*, vessels of equal strength, was a British victory. In the war on commerce also the Americans showed infinite daring and resource. Using French ports as their bases, in the

years when Napoleon's power was being shattered, they wrought extraordinary havoc in the English Channel and the Irish Sea, such as the French had never rivalled. But though the number of British ships exposed to attack was immeasurably greater than the number of American ships, the American loss in captured ships during the three years was 1400 against the British loss of under 1700.

The main feature of the war on land was a systematic and persistent American attempt to conquer Canada. This enterprise was undertaken with every prospect of success. The total population of all the Canadian colonies was little over 300,000; the number of regular troops available for the defence of a frontier over 1000 miles long was less than 5000; and Britain, engaged in the final throes of the struggle with Napoleon, could spare no more until 1814. The Americans, on the other hand, raised during the war about 500,000 troops—a larger number than the total British forces engaged in all fields; and though most of them were employed in guarding against possible British descents from the sea, they could always supply a far greater force for the attack than was available for the defence. Moreover, persuaded that monarchy spelt tyranny, they hoped to be aided by a revolt of the Canadian settlers. When the first invading army entered Upper Canada in 1812, its general issued a florid proclamation inviting the inhabitants to throw off their chains and join the free States. But except for a few recent American immigrants, none answered this appeal; and the sons of the United Empire Loyalists rallied with such spirit to the flag for which their fathers had sacrificed so much that before the end of the campaign the author of the proclamation and his army were compelled to surrender. Nor were the French settlers of Lower Canada less staunch. Though there was some resistance to the raising of the militia, they fought with splendid *élan*, and perhaps the most brilliant episode of the whole war was the fight of Chateauguay, in which 300 French Canadians routed an army of 3000 which was attempting to advance against Montreal. Finally, the defence received invaluable assistance from a force of Shawnee Indians led by Tecumseh, perhaps the greatest statesman whom the Red Indian race had produced. He regarded the British Government as the natural protector of the Red Man, because of the regulations for the protection of the Indians which had been issued after the conquest of Canada and since systematically observed. In 1811 one of Tecumseh's settlements had been

destroyed in his absence by a body of American pioneers ; in 1812 therefore he was quick to range himself on the British side. Time and again he and his braves gave valuable assistance in the defence ; and Tecumseh himself died fighting gallantly at the battle of Moraviantown (1813), in which the British force was rather shamefully beaten.

It is needless to follow the confused course of the struggle. There was fighting between squadrons of lake-boats, both on Lake Erie, where the Americans won the upper hand in 1813 and kept it, and on Lake Ontario, where the superiority passed from one side to the other. There was fighting by land at both ends of Lake Erie and on the line of Lake Champlain and the river Richelieu ; the chief battle-ground being the Niagara peninsula between the two great lakes, which saw the hard-fought and indecisive battle of Lundy's Lane in 1814, as well as many lesser tussles. But the net result of all was that the American armies failed to make any serious impression upon the Canadian frontier ; and the result of this long, swaying strife was the birth of a sentiment of national pride among the Canadians.

In 1814, after Napoleon's abdication, Britain was able to send to America some of the veterans of the Peninsular war ; and their advent was followed by a more aggressive conduct of the war. Some of them were sent to Canada ; but with others it was decided to make a series of attacks upon the American coast. A fleet carried a substantial force up the Potomac, and landed it near Washington ; the American army of defence was defeated under the eyes of the President ; and the Capitol and the President's house were burned. This act of vandalism was defended as a retaliation for the action of the Americans in burning down York (Toronto) and the village of Newark. But two blacks do not make a white, and the burning of Washington did much to embitter still further the relations of the two kindred peoples. At the beginning of 1815 a similar attack on New Orleans was needlessly delayed and badly conducted ; the defence was skilfully managed by the American commander Jackson ; and 2000 men were sacrificed in a vain attempt to storm, under withering fire, a rampart built of cotton-bales. The sacrifice was thrown away ; for before the battle was fought peace had been already signed by the negotiators who had for some time been sitting at Ghent in Belgium.

The Treaty of Ghent, which closed the second (and, it is to be hoped, the last) war between the two great divisions

of the English-speaking peoples, served to illustrate the futility of the war. For it made no change whatsoever. So far as any definite result was concerned—apart from the stimulation of Canadian patriotism—all the lives and all the treasure which had been expended had merely been wasted. The war had not even helped Napoleon to stave off his downfall, which had been completed (to all appearances) before peace was signed. But it had rekindled the animosities which unhappily divided the two great commonwealths of freedom.

[Channing, *History of the United States*, Walker, *The Making of the Nation*; Lucas, *The War of 1812*, Roosevelt, *Naval War of 1812*; Kingsford, *History of Canada* (10 vols.); Grant, *Short History of Canada*; Mahan, *Sea-Power in Relation to the War of 1812*]

CHAPTER X

THE PENINSULAR WAR AND THE RISING OF THE NATIONS

(A.D. 1808-1815)

§ 1. *The Opening of the Peninsular War : the Victories of 1808.*

THERE is poetic justice in the fact that the most cynical of all Napoleon's acts of aggression brought about the beginning of his decline. Without a shadow of right he destroyed the freedom of the Spanish nation, and annexed their historic land to his empire ; and behold ! he had raised against himself the unconquerable force of national sentiment, he had opened to his unresting foe an ideal opportunity of piercing his armour, he had committed himself to a Sisyphean task which strained all his resources. The Peninsular War was, in Napoleon's own phrase, the ' running sore ' which so weakened him as to make his overthrow possible. That it did so was due to two things : the fiery patriotism of the Spanish people, and the fighting power of the British army, resting on the sea. Gallant as it was, the resistance of the Spaniards would probably have been crushed in 1809 or 1810 but for the intervention of the British forces. On the other hand, even the genius of Wellington and the imperturbable valour of his little army could have done nothing had they not been backed by a nation in arms.

When, after Tilsit, Napoleon resolved to force Portugal into the Continental System, he obtained the concurrence of Spain to the transport of a French army across her territory by promising to partition Portugal, to the advantage of the Spanish monarchy and of the able but untrustworthy minister of Spain, Godoy. He had no intention of fulfilling these promises ; on the contrary, he was already designing the ruin of his ally. Junot's army, destined for Portugal, was followed by a series of others, which planted themselves on the main roads to Madrid, seizing fortresses

by treacherous *coups de main* (November 1807—February 1808). The Spanish court suddenly realised its danger, and thought of flight. A rising in Madrid prevented it, and forced the old King Charles IV. to abdicate in favour of his son Ferdinand (March). But Napoleon inveigled both Charles and Ferdinand on to French soil at Bayonne, forced both to give up their claims (May), contemptuously pensioned off Charles, threw Ferdinand into prison, and bestowed the crown of Spain upon his own brother, Joseph Buonaparte (June). Meanwhile a French force occupied Madrid, and the French armies held down all the north of the country, while Junot had safely fulfilled his task in Portugal, and was master of that country. A shameless and cynical act of treachery was apparently completely successful.

But the tyrant had to count with the pride of a historic people. In every part of the country there was (May, June) an outburst of patriotic rage. Local 'Juntas' formed themselves, and called out all the strength of their provinces for a holy war, and the French found that they held nothing beyond the ground occupied by their armies.¹ Napoleon did not take this insurrectionary fury very seriously; he believed that two or three expeditionary armies, despatched into the chief provinces, would soon shatter all organised resistance, and that the rest would be merely a matter of police. But these expectations were dramatically disappointed. Before the city of Saragossa, in the north, a French army of 15,000 men was held at bay for months by a horde of peasants and townsfolk under the heroic young adventurer Palafox. An army sent to subjugate the eastern province of Valencia had to withdraw with a loss of 1000 men. Worst of all, an army of 20,000 men, sent southwards to beat down the resistance of Andalusia, was actually forced to capitulate at Baylen (June). This was the most shattering blow which the prestige of the French armies had yet received. It aroused intense excitement throughout Europe. The Spanish patriots became the heroes of a world's admiration. Men began to realise the immense potency of national feeling. Indeed, they overestimated it. They hoped that the Spaniards, unaided, would be able to free themselves from the despot.

The Juntas however, sanguine as they were, did not share these wild hopes. They despatched urgent appeals for aid to Britain, their only possible source of help; and it was

¹ See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 19, 6th Edition Plate 70.

from Britain that they drew henceforward most of the money and supplies which enabled them to keep their armies on foot. But they got more from Britain than guns and money. The British Government resolved to strike promptly in support of the Spanish national rising. In August a British army landed in Portugal; and British forces were to continue to play their part thenceforward until the last Frenchman had been driven out of the Iberian Peninsula.

The arrival of this army marks a turning-point in the history of the Napoleonic wars. Small as it was (it numbered only 16,000 men), it was soon to prove its quality. And its commander was Arthur Wellesley,¹ the first great master of the art of war whom Britain had produced since Marlborough. Though only thirty-nine years old, Wellesley had already won his spurs in the Indian wars. He had shown in India that he possessed the gifts of a statesman as well as those of a general, and had the power of inspiring confidence. He was always master of himself, neither the elation of success nor the presence of danger could disturb his balance of mind. Infinitely patient, he could await his opportunities; and though he could take great risks, his most daring acts were always founded on calculation. He valued precision and accuracy of statement; he never allowed himself to be cozened by hopes or fears; he never doctored the facts to produce an effect; and there is no greater contrast than this between himself and the great imaginative genius whom he was to overthrow. By untiring industry he had made himself master of all the tedious minutiae affecting the organisation of armies: to this he attributed his success; he knew exactly what an army could do. Up to these limits he was as exacting in his demands upon his men as he was unsparing in his demands upon himself. To these qualities he added a very sure military judgment, a quick eye for opportunities, and a fearlessness in assuming responsibilities, which made him always a dangerous foe. These were qualities which perhaps fell short of the highest genius; but they were unvarying, always to be depended upon. They inspired implicit trust rather than affection; for Wellesley never won from his men the passionate devotion which the magnetic personality of Napoleon aroused.

Within three weeks of his landing, Wellesley had broken Junot's army at Vimeiro (August) and forced it to sue for

¹ There is a short life of the Duke of Wellington by George Hooper, in the 'English Men of Action' Series.

terms ; for the Spanish rising had cut off its retreat. But unfortunately two elderly incompetents had been placed in superior command over the young general. They had luckily arrived just too late to prevent the winning of victory, but they arrived in time to forbid its being driven home by a prompt pursuit, and to grant Junot the foolish Convention of Cintra whereby he was allowed to withdraw his army intact, with all its plunder. For this disgraceful transaction these commanders were rightly recalled, but Wellesley had to return and stand a court-martial alongside of the superiors who had spoilt his brilliant success, and the command of the army fell, for the remainder of the campaign, to Sir John Moore.

§ 2 *Napoleon in Spain and the Retreat to Corunna*

Baylen and Vimeño between them seemed, to superficial observers, to have broken the French attack on Spain. The French armies fell back towards the frontier, while from all the provinces Spanish armies, full of self-confidence, hurried into position in a long line north of Madrid, to repel a new attack. The British army in Portugal was ordered to take its place in this line. Moore therefore advanced into Spain as far as Salamanca.

It was not to be expected that Napoleon would submit to the disasters of 1808. He resolved to crush resistance at once by a swift and heavy blow. A great host of 200,000 men was collected by the end of October, and Napoleon himself took command. He fell like a thunderbolt upon one Spanish army after another, swept them from his path in a series of shattering victories, and by December 3 had occupied Madrid. He seems to have been unaware of the very existence of Moore's little army on his flank, as he swept superbly on. Three weeks he spent in Madrid, drafting projects for the reorganisation of Spain, and defining the moves on the chessboard by which his Marshals were to complete the victory. Meanwhile Moore had found himself suspended in the air, far into Spain, while the armies with which he was to co-operate were broken into fugitive mobs. His first thought was to beat a retreat to Portugal. But then a more daring project occurred to him, he might threaten Napoleon's communications, and perhaps tempt him to loose his talons from his prey. So, with 27,000 men, he set out eastwards, and was on the point of striking at a French army under Soult, when he heard that Napoleon had turned to pursue him.

The bait had proved too tempting. Napoleon thirsted to capture a whole British army, and gave orders for pursuit, withdrawing for the purpose the forces that might have completed the subjugation of Southern Spain. Moore turned to retreat not a moment too soon. It was impossible to get back to Portugal; instead, he turned towards Corunna. But it was only by forced marches that he succeeded in distancing his pursuers; and his little army suffered terrible hardships, and lost heavily during the retreat. Yet the retreat had achieved more than many victories. It had drawn off Napoleon and his main forces from the south; and when the Emperor himself abandoned the pursuit (January 1, 1809), handing it over to his Marshal, Soult, it was too late to return. He was needed at home. Soon the revolt of Austria, which the Spanish rising had stimulated, was to occupy all his attention, and he never returned in person to Spain.

Soult continued the pursuit. He came up with the British army at Corunna, as the embarkation was beginning. But though the guns and cavalry were already aboard, the infantry turned and inflicted upon him a bloody repulse (January 16, 1809). The gallant Moore was killed in the action, and hurriedly buried in the city of his glory before his comrades withdrew over the sea, where no pursuit was possible. But he had saved Spain and Portugal for the moment, and made it possible for the heroic struggle to continue.

§ 3. *Holding the Fort*: 1809, 1810, 1811.

After the retreat to Corunna the war changed its character. During 1809 Napoleon was unable to devote his main strength to the Spanish campaign, because he had the war with Austria on his hands, and at Aspern and Wagram the Austrians fought with a desperate gallantry previously unknown. He had also to deal with a British landing at Walcheren; but that was, on the whole, an advantage, because it drew off 40,000 good British troops who might have been of inestimable value in the Peninsula. In spite of these drains upon his resources, he maintained in Spain armies totalling about 300,000 men. These huge numbers were necessary because they had to deal with two nations in arms, and to carry on a whole series of more or less distinct campaigns for the subjugation of various regions—Catalonia, Valencia, Andalusia, Galicia and Portugal. We

need not follow these campaigns. In general the French were successful against Spanish armies in the field ; but as they advanced fresh insurrections sprang up behind them, which made them relax their hold upon their conquests.

Meanwhile Wellesley had resumed command of the army in Portugal ; he had also been given control over the Portuguese army, which, under Marshal Beresford, was gradually turned into an efficient fighting force. His position was threatened from two sides—by Soult in Galicia, whom Napoleon had ordered to reconquer Portugal, and by Victor with the army of Andalusia. Wellesley first struck hard at Soult, who had occupied Oporto ; by a daring exploit he crossed the Douro and hunted the enemy out of Portugal, compelling him to abandon his baggage and escape by devious mountain tracks. Then, hurrying swiftly southwards, he undertook a bold march into Spain, to co-operate with the Spanish armies in an attempt to strike at Madrid. He won a brilliant victory over Victor at Talavera, for which he was rewarded by a peerage. But new French armies were coming up, and he found the Spanish generals impracticable and untrustworthy. He was dangerously far from his base ; and when Soult, advancing from the north, threatened his communications, he only saved himself by a rapid retreat. Thus, during 1809, Portugal had been cleared ; but the sanguine hopes of great successes in Spain had come to nothing. The Spanish armies were everywhere hard-pressed, and could be no longer counted upon for any big effort. The Spaniards could defend cities, could carry on gallant partisan warfare, could make the situation of the French armies very difficult by imperilling their communications ; but they could not win victories, or drive the French out of the country. If that task was to be achieved, it must be achieved by Britain.

And now the Austrian war was over, and Napoleon could turn his whole strength once more against Spain. In the winter of 1809-1810 Soult, with a great army, was given the task of conquering Andalusia, where alone large Spanish armies still held the field. He was all but completely successful. By the beginning of February the whole province had been subjugated, and the remnants of the Spanish army were penned into Cadiz. The conquest of Andalusia was a crushing blow. Many observers thought that the end of the Spanish resistance was at hand.

For the campaign of 1810 Napoleon had reserved the final and decisive stroke—the reconquest of Portugal, and the

driving of the British army into the sea. The ablest of Napoleon's Marshals, Masséna, was chosen for this task ; and he was given a great army of the finest quality, nearly 130,000 men, against whom Wellington could count upon only 30,000 British troops, and an equal number of Portuguese, as yet untried in serious fighting. Wellington had anticipated the coming storm, and had made preparation for it. Knowing that the French counted upon living on the country through which they passed, he had prepared to fight them with the weapons of starvation. He had cleared the whole centre of the country, along the line of the French advance, of all its population and all its food supplies, sending the people to take refuge among the hills. Across the peninsula at the mouth of the Tagus he had constructed the impregnable lines of Torres Vedras, with 126 formidable redoubts and 427 guns. The lines were between 20 and 30 miles across ; they could be defended by the whole British and Portuguese armies. In front of them would lie an empty and foodless land ; behind them the population of the surrounding country, who would be fed from the sea.

Having made these dispositions, Wellington took post with his army across the line of Masséna's advance. At Busaco he inflicted a sharp defeat upon the advancing host. Then he withdrew ; and left Masséna to lead his starving army up against the impregnable barrier of Torres Vedras. Masséna saw that his task was hopeless, and fell back. By the time he recrossed the frontier, he had lost 25,000 men, mainly from sickness and starvation. And Portugal was still unconquered. After the campaign of 1810, no French army again ventured to cross the Portuguese frontier.

Torres Vedras was in truth the turning-point of the war. But it seemed to contemporaries that the stone had rolled down to the bottom of the hill again, and that the whole work was yet to be done. The Spanish forces were nearly exhausted. In the north-east, indeed, they were giving serious trouble, and the irregular warfare of partisans was more active than ever. But there were no large armies in the field. In Andalusia Cadiz alone held out ; and though a brilliant sally by an Anglo-Spanish force won the battle of Barrosa, it led to no result.

In 1811 Wellington set himself to clear the main roads from Portugal into Spain. They were guarded by great fortresses ; in the north Ciudad Rodrigo, faced by the

Portuguese fortress of Almeida, and in the south Badajoz. Wellington took Almeida, and beat off a French attempt to relieve it at Fuentes d'Onoro. Meanwhile Beresford had been watching Badajoz, and had fought, with a mixed British, Spanish and Portuguese force, the bloody battle of Albuera, in which the brunt of the fighting fell upon the British contingent, who lost half of their number killed, and yet won the day. But Badajoz still held out. Thus little apparent progress had been made; and but for the desperate valour of the Spanish guerilla bands (who were at their most active in this year) the prospects of an ultimate French victory would still have been bright. At home men were beginning to be tired of the war; no real progress seemed ever to be made.

§ 4. *The Expulsion of the French from Spain, 1812-1814.*

But the tide turned definitely in 1812. The dangerous years 1810 and 1811, when there was no other call upon Napoleon's resources, had been safely passed. Now, in 1812, he was driven to undertake the Russian campaign. He began to withdraw troops from Spain, though not yet in large numbers. And at the same time Wellington again undertook a vigorous aggressive. By bold storming attacks, wasteful of life but saving in time, he captured the two great fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz; and the main roads into Spain lay open to him. Then he struck boldly into Central Spain, towards Salamanca. Here he met an equal force under Marmont, and won a dazzling victory, which shook the French power in Spain to its foundations. King Joseph had to flee once more from Madrid, which British troops occupied. To save the situation, the French had to give up the attempt to hold down the south and centre of the country, in order to gather together sufficient forces to regain Madrid. They regained it; they even forced Wellington to retreat once more to the frontiers of Portugal. But they had lost all the south, and this they were never to regain. The clearing of Spain had begun, following on the clearing of Portugal. It was to be rapidly achieved during the next campaign, that of 1813.

As we shall see later, in 1813 Napoleon, back from the disasters of the Russian campaign, had to fight for his control over Germany, against the armies of Russia, Prussia, Austria and Sweden. For this reason he was compelled to recall large forces from Spain, and the French armies in

Spain were therefore driven to abandon more and more of the country in order to concentrate for the defence of the North. But they still outnumbered their opponents ; and the mere fact of their concentration made them more formidable in manœuvre and in battle. The Spanish war had regained unity. It was unified on the other side also ; for in 1812 all the armies of Spain had been placed under Wellington's supreme command, and he had made his control effective in time for the beginning of the 1813 campaign.

This was to be one of the most brilliant of Wellington's campaigns. Had he advanced with all his forces directly upon the enemy from Ciudad Rodrigo, the enemy could have concentrated upon him with superior forces. He therefore divided his army, and ordered the larger half, under Graham, to advance from the far north of Portugal by a difficult and little-used route, while he himself took the expected course from Ciudad Rodrigo. The result was that whenever the enemy prepared to concentrate against Wellington, they found themselves threatened with outflanking by Graham, and were forced to fall back. Thus, with inferior forces, Wellington manœuvred the French backwards until they were against the Pyrenees. Then he struck hard, and won at Vittoria (June) one of the most brilliant of his victories. The result was practically to compel the French to evacuate Spain. Soult, now in supreme command, delayed the retreat by a brilliant series of actions in the Pyrenees, while the French garrisons of San Sebastian and Pampeluna held out doggedly. But by October this resistance had been beaten down, and Wellington's armies had forced the passage of the frontier river Bidassoa, and begun the invasion of France. Before the year ended, two successive lines of defence, on the Nivelle and the Nive, had also been forced ; and allied armies were well planted on the soil of France, which had not seen an invader since 1793.

In 1814 the European allies also were to invade France ; and while Napoleon was fighting the desperate battles of Champagne which ended in his abdication, Soult was enduring blow after blow in the South, at Orthez (February) and at Toulouse (April). It was in the North that the issue was decided : Napoleon had already abdicated before the battle of Toulouse was fought. And it is also plain that it was the pressure of the campaign of Central Europe in 1813 which had made possible the rapid collapse of the French power in Spain in that year. But if this is true, it is equally

true that the Spanish campaign made the northern victories possible. If in 1813 Napoleon had been able to dispose freely of all the great armies that were locked up in Spain, there can be little doubt that the conflict in Germany would have been decided in his favour. Even in 1814 the armies of Spain would have made a world of difference, could they have been transplanted to Champagne. And what had kept these armies locked up in Spain was the dogged resolution and resource with which Wellington had clung on during the years 1809, 1810, 1811, when all the vast power of the Napoleonic empire was available. If the Spanish resistance had been crushed during any of these years, it is likely that the downfall of Napoleon's empire would have been long delayed. The unconquerable ardour of Spanish patriotism and the dogged tenacity of Britain had not, indeed, by themselves saved Europe; but they had made it possible for Europe to save herself.

§ 5. *The Growth of National Feeling, and the Russian Campaign.*

While the long struggle swayed backwards and forwards in Spain, while the British fleets maintained their eternal vigil, and the enterprise of British traders and sailors unflaggingly sought out new modes of penetrating the continental blockade, popular sentiment in Europe, which had at first been not unfavourable to Napoleon because his dominion brought the boons of social equality and equal laws, was steadily turning against him; the rising of the nations, which was to bring about his downfall, was preparing. Two things combined to cause this change of sentiment. The first was resentment against the hardships caused by the blockade: this was especially intense from 1810 onwards. The second was the growth of national sentiment, which had hitherto been very weak in most of Europe, and especially in Germany and Italy. It was stimulated by the inspiring example of Spain and by the stubborn and unbending resistance of Britain. How potent a force national sentiment can be had been shown by France in 1793: soon France was to feel its strength in opposition to herself.

There was an impressive demonstration of the fighting strength which the new spirit could give in the Austrian war of 1809: though Austria had to fight alone, her soldiers fought far more desperately than in any earlier campaign;

and the gallant resistance of the Tyrolese mountaineers under the heroic innkeeper, Andreas Hofer, gave an earnest of the fire and valour which patriotism on the defensive could inspire.

It was in Germany, however, that the change of temper found its most remarkable expressions. National sentiment had hitherto been weak in Germany, because of her division into a multitude of petty States. In the eighteenth century her poets and philosophers had even prided themselves upon rising above the narrow emotion of patriotism; and in that spirit Germany had welcomed first the French Revolution and then the world-empire of Napoleon. But Napoleon's tyranny rapidly brought a change, and the nationalist movement in Germany was born in resistance to him. Its centre was the ruined State of Prussia, which had been so terribly humbled after Jena. That drastic punishment was the beginning of a new life for Prussia. Calling in the aid of men from all parts of Germany, she undertook a noble labour of reconstruction, which drew to her the sympathy of all Germany, and made her the destined nucleus of a future united German nation. In 1807 and the following years, Fichte the philosopher was preaching the duty of patriotism in a series of noble *Addresses to the German Nation*, which were read wherever the German tongue was spoken; Humboldt was creating a new educational system to serve as the foundation of a better social order; Stein, the greatest of the group, was abolishing serfdom and establishing a system of local self-government; Scharnhorst was organising a new army, based upon the obligation of military service as a primary civic duty. The Prussian army had been limited by Napoleon to 43,000 men; but by taking in new levies every year and dismissing them after a short period of training, Scharnhorst turned this disability into an advantage: by 1812 Prussia had 130,000 men trained to arms.

Thus, during the years of Napoleon's greatest power, the national spirit which was to destroy him was being evoked; and the ground was beginning to quake beneath the feet of the despot of Europe when in 1812 the threatened breakdown of his Continental System forced him to embark upon a war with Russia.

Yet, despite the growing strength of national feeling and the growing resentment of Napoleon's tyranny, all Europe still lay under his spell in the spring of 1812—fascinated by the prestige of a conqueror who had never failed in anything

which he had undertaken. Nobody felt the spell more than Napoleon himself. He had come to believe in his own infallibility. He had lost touch with the traditions of the Revolution, and had become a pure despot, maddened by opposition. His outlook was clouded by egotism ; he was losing that sure grasp of realities which had been so large an element in his strength ; and his marvellous physical and mental powers were beginning to deteriorate under the influence of self-worship, and the terrific strain to which he had long subjected himself. The Russian campaign illustrated the temper which now governed Napoleon. It was intended to rivet his ascendancy upon Europe by a grandiose display of his irresistible power. Russia had dared to break away from the Continental System. She must be so terribly punished as to make Europe tremble, and abandon her restless dreams of freedom. Russia's downfall and the co-operation of the United States would ensure the ruin of Britain ; and without Britain Spain would be no longer troublesome.

The great expedition which was to achieve these ends had been in preparation since early in 1811 ; and when its component armies, led by famous marshals whose names were only less terrible than that of Napoleon himself, began to deploy along the Russian frontier in the spring of 1812, such a representation of all the historic civilisations of Europe was displayed as had never been seen since the gathering of the hosts for the First Crusade in 1095. The armies numbered over 600,000—the greatest array that had ever been gathered in Europe. Only half of the host was French ; the rest was drawn from all Napoleon's subject peoples, while auxiliary armies from Prussia and from Austria marched on either flank.

Against this superb host Russia could only oppose far inferior forces. But she could trust to the patriotic spirit of her people. A proclamation issued by the Tsar, wherein he announced that he would make no peace so long as a single foreign soldier remained on Russian soil, answered to the spirit of the people ; and Napoleon found that his task was no longer the comparatively easy one of overthrowing organised armies and imposing terms upon their masters. He had to deal, as in Spain, with the opposition of a whole people, who harassed his troops in every possible way, and left him sure of nothing beyond the ground actually occupied by his armies. This was what defeated him ; this and the vast spaces of Russia.

At the end of June 1812 the huge glittering host crossed the river Niemen, and disappeared among the forests of Russia, while Europe waited breathlessly for the event. News came that the Russians had been defeated on the Borodino (September); but it was not told that Napoleon had failed to isolate or crush any of the Russian armies. News came that the Emperor had made a triumphant entry into Moscow (September); but it was not told that he had entered an almost empty city, and that a great part of it had subsequently been burnt; it was not told that the Tsar had refused even to discuss peace; it was not told that Moscow, so far from the French base, could not be held during the severities of a Russian winter, in face of intact and growing armies; it was not told that, knowing this, Napoleon nevertheless held on irresolutely almost till the grip of winter began, rather than confess failure, and that by doing so he condemned his soldiers to the awful tragedy of a retreat through a deserted, icebound, and foodless country under incessant harassment from an active and exultant foe.

After the news of the capture of Moscow a curtain hid the doings of the Grand Army from Europe. But there were rumours, which grew and swelled. And at length the full extent of the disaster was revealed, when from the frost-bound forests there emerged a few thousand gaunt and starving men, the remnants of the Grand Army. At their head came the Emperor, hurrying back to Paris with a fragment of his Imperial Guard, to take precautions against the consequences which must follow from this disaster. But he had left behind him in Russia the superb self-confidence which had hitherto borne him up. It was not the same Napoleon who turned at bay to face the growing revolt of his vassals; and his marshals and his men had lost something of that absolute assurance of victory, and that adoring reliance upon their chief, which had been half their strength.

§ 6. *The Battle of the Nations and the Fall of Napoleon.*

But Napoleon's cause was not yet lost, even after the Russian disaster. The Russian armies alone could not have made any serious impression upon his empire; and the spell which he had cast upon Europe was still so strong that other Powers hesitated to come to Russia's aid. Even

Prussia hesitated ; it was only the passionate eagerness of her people that drove her King into making a formal alliance with Russia in February 1813. No other Power was yet prepared to enter the fray ; and Britain, whose forces were engaged in Spain and America, but who supplied the subsidies without which the struggle could not have been carried on, was the only Power whose help was sure. On the other hand, Napoleon could still draw upon all the resources not only of France, but of Holland, Western Germany, Switzerland and Italy. His armies held the line of the Elbe from Hamburg to Saxony ; by herculean efforts he was able to put into the field nearly 250,000 men, a total which outnumbered the combined forces of Russia and Prussia ; and new levies increased the number as the campaign went on.

The German campaign of 1813 falls into two clearly marked stages. In the first, which lasted until June, Napoleon held the upper hand, and inflicted many blows upon his opponents. But he found that they were no longer so ready as of yore to admit defeat. The Prussians especially fought without thought of yielding ; and the gaps in their ranks were more than filled by the eager rush of recruits. Moreover, Napoleon himself had lost his old sureness of inspiration. He missed opportunities of driving home his successes ; and in June, when the game seemed to be in his hands, he asked for a month's armistice and began to talk about terms. That sealed his fate. During the armistice came the news of the battle of Vittoria—the news that the French had been driven out of Spain. New enemies, Austria and Sweden, joined the alliance against him ; and in the second phase of the campaign (July-October) a ring of armies slowly closed in upon him. On October 16, Napoleon found himself half-surrounded at Leipsic by greatly superior numbers, and after a desperate battle of three days, well called the Battle of the Nations, had to admit irretrievable defeat.

He escaped to France with only about 70,000 men, out of the half-million he had raised that year. He escaped through vassal lands that threw off his yoke the moment the news of the defeat reached them. France was suddenly reduced once more to the Rhine frontier, the frontier of 1797 ; while in the South Wellington had already crossed the frontier. After losing two large armies within twelve months, she had to prepare to defend herself against united Europe.

When Napoleon returned to Paris in the autumn of 1814, he had to raise fresh armies for the third time within a single year ; and he could not now draw upon any vassal States. His veterans were gone, hundreds of thousands of them dead in Spain and Russia and Germany ; thousands more captives in the hands of his enemies, or beleaguered in German garrison towns ; he had to make new armies of boys and old men. The magic of his name brought them to the standards, and against the invaders of France they were to fight with a valour equal to that of 1793. But they were now hopelessly outnumbered, and the *élan* of victory was on the side of their enemies.

The allies did not forget how Frenchmen could fight on their own soil ; they were, moreover, divided among themselves, and at cross-purposes as to the future arrangement of Europe. Before beginning the invasion of France they offered to Napoleon terms more generous than he had any right to expect ; he might keep the Rhine frontier, thus permanently adding Belgium and Western Germany to France. But even now Napoleon could not bring himself to abandon his vaulting ambitions. He refused the terms ; and before the year 1813 was at an end the armies were crossing the frontier.

Then began one of the most marvellous of Napoleon's campaigns, on those fields of Northern France which were to be the scene of a yet greater struggle a hundred years later. Fighting against overwhelming odds, he seemed to regain all his old verve and rapidity of action. He struck on this side and on that, fending off the converging advance of the allied armies. The allies began once more to quarrel and to work at cross-purposes ; and it was not until a conference had been held at Chatillon (February), (when Castlereagh, as the spokesman of Britain, showed great tact and skill in smoothing over difficulties) that they succeeded in adjusting their differences. Once more they offered terms to Napoleon (March) ; but this time it was the frontier of 1791, before the beginning of the revolutionary war. Napoleon had won some military success at the moment, and with blind infatuation he refused. Before the end of the month mere weight of numbers, and the desperate eagerness of Blücher's Prussians, had borne him down. The last battle, on the outskirts of Paris, was fought on March 30, 1814, and on April 11, at Fontainebleau, Napoleon signed his abdication. After much discussion as to his fate the allies bestowed upon him the little Italian island

of Elba, whither he betook himself two days after his abdication. He was even now only forty-six years old.

A long nightmare seemed to have been lifted from the world. In every town and village of Europe illuminations celebrated the return of peace. The fighting men came back to their homes, Germans with still unsatisfied ardour for the freedom and unity of their nation, Spaniards hopeful of reward for their long self sacrifice, thousands of French veterans from the prisons of England and the beleaguered garrisons of Germany, full of memories of the magic of the banished Emperor. Among them all only the British veterans of the Peninsula had no rest, for they must cross the Atlantic to face a new war. The Bourbons returned to France, followed by a train of *émigrés*. And the diplomats of all the nations assembled in Vienna, to draw the new map of Europe. But there was no such harmony among them as the magnitude of their task demanded, no agreement of principles, but a turmoil of conflicting interests. Already, in the first year of the peace, the Great Powers, who had found it difficult enough to combine in resistance to a common danger, were on the point of coming to blows over the distribution of the spoils of victory.

Meanwhile in France, the source of all Europe's troubles, there was relief at the return of peace, but there was also a sense that a glory had departed. The Emperor demanding unceasing toll of the nation's manhood had been a burden and a terror, but the Emperor, banished, renewed his old fascination. The Bourbon King, Louis XVIII, was an honest man, doing his best. He granted a charter which conferred wider political liberties than ever Napoleon allowed. In plain prose, France had every reason to be content. But France had grown used to the poetry of life. She could not readily submit to the spectacle of Louis XVIII on the throne of Napoleon, a barn-door fowl on the perch of an eagle.

Eleven months passed, months of unrest and growing disillusionment. Napoleon was watching and reading the signs of the times from Elba. Suddenly, in March 1815, Europe was startled by the news that he had landed on the coast of France, that his veterans were flocking to join him, that no one dared offer him resistance, that, without striking a blow, he had made a royal progress northwards; and, finally, that the Bourbons had fled helplessly, and left the Man of Destiny once more master of France. The masters of Europe at Vienna patched up their quarrels in alarm, and closed their ranks. They declared Napoleon an

outlaw, with whom there could be no parley. The four Great Powers (Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia) renewed their solemn compact that there should be no peace with France until the power of Napoleon was utterly eradicated, and undertook each to maintain an army of 150,000 until that end should have been secured. But the armies had for the most part to be re-formed and brought into the field ; and with Napoleon at large, and France in the exalted mood of 1793, anything might be expected.

§ 7. *The Hundred Days.*

Napoleon landed on French soil on March 4, 1815 ; he was master of Paris by March 20 ; he was defeated at Waterloo on June 18 ; he abdicated for the second time on June 22 ; and on July 15 he surrendered himself to the captain of the *Bellerophon*, the representative of the British navy which he had never been able to defeat or to evade, and whose impregnable resistance was the ultimate cause of his downfall.

If he had at first cherished some hope that the Great Powers would permit him to resume the throne of France rather than undertake the labour of expelling him, or that their dissensions would give him a chance of establishing himself, he was soon disabused by the firm and unbending attitude adopted by the potentates of Vienna. The few weeks of leisure for preparation which the swift surprise of his return allowed to him were mainly devoted to the organisation of all his available forces. The army which he took over from the fugitive Government numbered only 200,000 ; and though the returned veterans eagerly rejoined his standards, he could count less than 300,000 regular troops in June, together with less than 250,000 National Guards and other auxiliaries of little military value. With these he had to provide for the defence of the long frontier against the inevitable attacks of Austrian, Russian, Prussian and other armies.

But it would take time for the Russians and the Austrians to be brought into the field. In the meanwhile he might, by swift action, win some dramatic success which would bewilder the enemy and perhaps break up their coalition. Here lay his only hope. The two nearest enemy armies were a mixed force under the Duke of Wellington, which occupied Western Belgium, and a Prussian army in the Rhine

Province and Eastern Belgium. Wellington's army at first consisted of only 10,000 British troops. Reinforcements were poured in which raised this number to 30,000 by the middle of June, but unfortunately few of the veterans of Spain had yet returned from America. Various contingents of German, Dutch, and Belgian troops more than doubled this total; but it was a very composite force, and parts of it were quite untrustworthy. The Prussian army was also rapidly reinforced; by the middle of June it had risen to 117,000, and was under the command of Blücher, who had borne the brunt of the campaigns of 1813 and 1814. Napoleon's plan was to prevent these two armies from making a junction, and to annihilate each in turn by swift blows. One advantage he possessed: the two opposing armies rested on bases in opposite directions. The British could not afford to lose touch with the sea; the Prussians would be loth to endanger their communications with the East and the Rhine. To carry out this project the Emperor could spare only 125,000 men—a force greater than that of either of his enemies singly, but substantially inferior to them if they were allowed to combine.

He started for the front on June 12. He found both Wellington and Blücher in Southern Belgium, not far apart; Wellington's advanced troops at Quatre Bras, Blücher with the bulk of his force at Ligny.¹ On June 16, ordering Marshal Ney to contain the British at Quatre Bras, Napoleon threw his main weight against the Prussians, hoping either to annihilate them, or to drive them back to the east upon their base, and thus be left free to destroy the British army. The plan nearly succeeded. After hard fighting he drove back the Prussians; and if, as Napoleon had intended, Ney could have spared a corps to turn the western flank of the Prussians, the success would have been complete. But Ney was hard pressed: after repelling his onslaught, the British, reinforced, had taken the offensive, and he had to recall the needed corps to restore the situation.

Blücher therefore was able to fall back without being intercepted or headed off to the east; and instead of marching eastwards he marched northwards towards Wavre, while Wellington drew back his troops to a position he had chosen on low rising ground across the roads to Brussels, near the village of Waterloo. With his 67,000 men, many of them of uncertain quality, it would have been

¹ See the map of the Waterloo Campaign, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 20 (b), 6th Edition Plate 53 (b).

folly to risk a pitched battle against Napoleon's whole army, unless he could count upon support from the Prussians. But he got into touch with Blücher, who promised that he would be on the field by mid-day on the 18th; and on this understanding Wellington prepared to resist attack. Meanwhile Napoleon had, owing to delays for which he was himself to blame, lost touch with the Prussian retreat. But he despatched some 30,000 men under Grouchy to follow them.

On Sunday morning, June 18, Napoleon drew out his last army for his last battle. It consisted of 74,000 men. All were veterans; and in the rear were the splendid Imperial Guards, 20,000 strong. Every man in this fine array was visible from the British position; but all that Napoleon could see was a long bare slope, with four farm-houses, and behind them a thin line of infantry along the crest of the rise; the reserves were invisible beyond the slope. In all, Wellington had on the field 67,000 men. But only 24,000 of them were British, and half the remainder were untrustworthy troops, whom he dared hardly use.

Napoleon's plan of battle was simplicity itself. He despised the fighting power of the British soldier, and the military ability of Wellington; and he proposed to thrust through or trample down the thin opposing line by mere mass and weight, hurling at it columns of his tried veterans, who would have an overwhelming superiority of numbers at the chosen points of attack. For seven long hours, from 11.30 until 6.30, these unceasing attacks were withstood by the troops in line, and by the garrisons which held the farms of Hougomont in front of the right wing, and of La Haye Sainte in front of the centre. In one attack four massive columns, each containing eight battalions, were hurled against Wellington's centre; they were stopped, they wavered, and then a cavalry charge sent them hurtling down the slope again. In another, masses of cavalry charged the line; the British troops formed squares and beat them off; and then beat off a second onslaught, though not without heavy loss. But still the attacks continued; and by 6.30 the situation had become critical; La Haye Sainte had been lost, and all the reserves had been thrown into line.

Where were the Prussians, who had promised to be on the field before noon? Their advance guard had been sighted as early as 1.30, and Napoleon had told off 10,000 men to form a flank on his right and hold them at bay until he should have finished with Wellington. But it was four

o'clock before they were seriously in action, and 6.30 before they made contact with the British left. They had come at the eleventh hour, but still in time. Their advent enabled Wellington to withdraw troops from his left wherewith to repel a new attack. It was the last ; and it was delivered by the Old Guard, Napoleon's staunchest veterans. Under a hail of musketry the Guards advanced up the slope in three hollow squares. As they drew near, the wearied British line rose to meet them, and advanced firing. A comparatively fresh division attacked them on the flank. The cavalry burst down upon them. They wavered, broke, and fled ; and the battle was won. Almost at the same moment Prussian and British troops reached the centre of Napoleon's position. There was no further possibility of resistance.

Napoleon made his way to Paris. He talked wildly of a *levée en masse*, and resistance to the uttermost. But his ministers and marshals told him that France would stand no further fighting. He left Paris, a fugitive. If he fell into the hands of the Bourbons, they would have no mercy on him. Blücher had ordered his capture, dead or alive, and had promised that he should be promptly shot. He made his way to Rochefort, with a vague hope of finding some means of escape to America. But off Rochefort hung a squadron of the British navy, carrying on that ceaseless vigil which was now to be relieved for a hundred years. Napoleon resolved to throw himself upon the mercy of his most unbending foe, and surrendered himself to the captain of the *Bellerophon*. By an act of poetic justice it was the British navy, which had throughout the long struggle been the chief buttress of resistance, that in the end received the submission of the great adventurer.

What to do with him was a puzzle which perplexed the Powers of Europe. They argued that he must be regarded as their common captive, and that he must be placed beyond all possibility of return. The lonely rock of St. Helena was chosen for his place of exile ; and there, amid the limitless seas which had always baffled and defied him, he ate out his heart for the remaining six years of his life. Surrounded by a little group of devoted friends, he read, and gardened, and quarrelled with his gaolers, and wrote fragments of an autobiography, and talked endlessly, reviewing his marvellous career, finding excuses for this and explanations of that, and striving to build up a picture of himself as an enlightened statesman and a crusader of liberty. The picture of Prometheus chained to his rock haunted the

imagination of the world ; and this, and the record of his talk preserved by his friends, helped to create a Napoleonic Legend, far different from the facts, which was, five-and-thirty years later, to make possible the disasters of the second Napoleonic régime.

So ended the most marvellous career in human history. For an epitaph upon it, we cannot do better than take the words of a great Frenchman, de Tocqueville : ' He was as great as a man can be without virtue.'

[See list at end of chap. VII.; also Napier, *Peninsular War*; Oman, *Peninsular War*; Coquelle, *Napoleon and England* (Eng. trans.); George, *Napoleon's Invasion of Russia*; Maxwell, *Life of Wellington*; Roper, *Campaign of Waterloo*; Houssaye, 1815.]

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